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*The* Diary-Letters *of*  
Sergt. Peyton Randolph Campbell





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# *The Diary-Letters of* Sergt. Peyton Randolph Campbell

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*January 1, 1919*

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SERGT. PEYTON RANDOLPH CAMPBELL

## Sergt. Peyton Randolph Campbell

ON Wednesday, September 4, 1918, near Fismes, on the Vesle River, in France, a Hun shell landed in the midst of the machine gun unit of which Sergt. Peyton Randolph Campbell was a part, taking seventeen men, including "Randy" or "Pete" as he was affectionately called. Entering Company D, 306th Machine Gun Battalion, as a private in the spring of 1918, "Randy" was soon promoted to Corporal, and a few days prior to his untimely death was made a Sergeant.

Although only twenty-four years of age, he was old in the experience of his craft and was known as a master advertising man, having held the position of Assistant Advertising Manager of Pratt & Lambert-Inc. He will long be remembered in Buffalo as the writer of many of the most effective Second Liberty Loan newspaper advertisements, particularly the facsimile newspaper front page, announcing the supposed invasion of this Country by the Germans. Subsequently, in a letter describing his experiences, he feelingly wrote: "What Fourth Liberty Loan copy I could write now!"

Despite his youth, Sergeant Campbell had also attained no small success as a short-story and song writer. His talents were varied and manifold, which makes his loss the more keenly felt by the many who knew him. "Randy's" sunny disposition and friendship, with which he was so generous, won him many friends who will find in these pages characteristic touches of humor and philosophy.

Aboard the troopship, on the way overseas, he started a diary-letter which he faithfully kept up daily and sent

to his mother. In these diary-letters—the whole of which are reproduced in this book—“Randy” displays his descriptive powers to their best advantage. He saw not only the big things of life—and the War, particularly—but also the lesser details, and these, with the true writer’s skill, he has chronicled most interestingly.

“Randy” did his duty as he saw it. When the call came he went gladly, and when his time came he undoubtedly laid down his life for his Country as freely and willingly as he had performed his daily tasks.

NOTE—The long dashes in the text of these diary-letters indicate portions deleted by censors.

## *The Diary-Letters of* Sergt. Peyton Randolph Campbell

*Monday, April 15th*

At last, and for the first time since I hopped the train for camp, I've begun to "realize the war." I've gone through the fullest and most fascinating three days of my life. I'm in my seat at mess-table, in the room on the ship that has been assigned to our company. Quarters have been fixed up in what was once the hold, two decks below the main deck. When our room was shown to us, the main question immediately was "But where do we sleep?"—because there was nothing in the room but mess-tables and seats. Eventually, however, the problem was solved, and when evening came there blossomed forth from the ceiling one solid forest of hammocks, the most inextricable miz-maze you could imagine; hammocks, interlocking, hung over and under each other, criss-cross; and straight ropes and cords making a regular cobweb through which the electric lights peeked spookily. The quarters are close, as is usual on shipboard, but the ventilation is good, and the place is spotless and kept so. Incidentally, I've fallen in love with hammock slumber.

I really should go back to the beginning—to the time when we left camp. We swept the barracks clean, packed our barrack bags and ran them off in the wagons to the station. Then we made up our packs, shouldered them, and made our way outside, in slush and rain, said goodbye to our old home, and were cheered by the rookies who now inhabit it, and by the few "old fellows" like ourselves who were still left in the one end of camp. Then and there I experienced the first real, honest-to-goodness, double-dyed thrill that I've had since I first saw the endless stretches of our camp. I felt, for once, like a real crusader. Then followed—I'm old enough now to be used to anti-climaxes—one of those mysterious army orders,

brought up by the headquarters orderly. "Column right—column right!" and we were on our way back to the barracks, meeting the good-humored jeers of the on-lookers. "What's the matter—is the war over?" and "Trust those machine gunners to make a quick job of it," and the like. Then back into that bare, cold barracks we went and sat, with packs on our backs, waiting. Finally the order to proceed arrived, and off we went again to the station to entrain for—where? The name on the railway coaches told us a little, but not much. I was lucky in being one of ten fellows who "overflowed" into a car that was by no means crowded. We were all good pals and were quite comfortable. Some of the joy was taken out of life when we found that we had to guard both ends of the car, because all the other men in the car were in branches of the service that don't or can't stand guard—"medics" and the like. So "Randy" didn't get much sleep that night.

Next morning we quietly rolled out onto a pier in (gee, I wish I could tell you where) and entered a big waiting room, from the windows of which we could see our ship. We were served breakfast on the pier, and shortly after noon were admitted, one by one, to the ship and our quarters. Well, that night we pulled out—and landed plunk into the tail end of a nor'easter that had been blowing for three days! Everybody—except an occasional hardy one—among whom I was *not*—was sick. I was very sick—didn't care much what happened to me. During the night, however, the storm abated, and by the next morning, things were not so bad. All day we plowed through the ocean, out of sight of land. You may imagine our surprise, then, when the news came that instead of being in the middle of the ocean, we were off a well-known American port! A long train ride—a day and a night out of sight of land, and a lovely storm, with wave-washed decks and all that, and then back in America again.

*Tuesday, April 16th*

There was an interesting break in the pleasant monotony of the late afternoon. Someone spied a dark spot in the water. Almost immediately a red rocket went up



from it—then another—and as we neared it, we discovered that we had run across a broken-down hydroplane. We hove to and turned about, and as we drew near it, exchanged signals with the two aviators who were clinging to it. They had been adrift for three hours, with night almost upon them, and believe me, they were mighty lucky to be picked up. We landed the men, and towed the machine to the vicinity of ——. And there we lay at anchor for two full days! Finally we moved—with other ships. (I can't say how many.) If these first four pages seem queer or inconsistent, it's because I've had to copy them with a censor's eye, and leave out (of course) most of the interesting parts. Good-night. I'm going to bed and see if I can't fool Old Man Neptune.

*Wednesday, April 17th*

Well, my little trick was a success and I cheated Old Man Ocean out of one victim for eight straight hours of slumber. When I awoke, it was only through the gentle ministrations of an iron-shod heel, the same belonging to a buck private in a neighboring hammock. He was trying to disembark from his hammock, and was evidently using me as a means to an end. Oh, well! Say, this is a circus—trying to write at a mess-table down in our hold, with sock-clad feet dangling almost on your very writing-table, while their owners are busily engaged in unslinging their hammocks from the ceiling. The persiflage that is flying about, even if it could be expurgated for civilian ears (especially feminine ones!) would still create a sensation if it could ever be caught and put down on paper. There's no question about it, the germ of real humor grows to fullest glory when you're up against it, and things aren't all they might be.

Today has been more or less uneventful. I've been on "table duty" today, which means that I scrubbed the table and the floor under it, stood in line for hours, it seemed, getting hot water that was cold by the time we were ready to use it, scrubbed the pails and pans, and all those nice little things. However, I'm glad I got it on a muggy, foggy day instead of a nice one.

I've just had a lovely new job handed me. I'm one of nine men out of the forty-five in our lifeboat who are to act as boat-guards. For the present we simply have to report for duty twice daily, five minutes before boat drill, but when we get into the danger zone, we'll be regular guards, on two hours and off four—and we'll be up there sitting in the boats, over the side of the vessel, with our life preservers on and a pair of busy binoculars in our hands. I don't know whether it's going to be more interesting to watch for "subs" by day or to be waiting for them during the long, cold, breezy watches along about three or four A. M. It's going to be a bit strenuous, but I'm glad of the opportunity—it's getting to be mighty interesting. Well, good-night—"Uncle Pete" is going to hang up his little hammock and turn in. There's a gentleman immediately above my table whose hammock hangs low, and every time the ship rolls, he bumps me and reminds me it is bedtime.

*Thursday, April 18th*

Today has been a strange medley of the fantastic and the ultra-real. I've been reading *Cathedrals and Cloisters of Southern France*—and every little while there'd be interruptions—the blare of an insistent bugle playing "to horse," and the signal for "abandon ship" drill—or a summons to exercises, physical examination or mess—all of which happen every day, but which nevertheless, you will admit, are liable to tear one rather abruptly from the pontifical pomp and pagan ferocity. The day passed uneventfully, the real events of the day beginning, for me, at six o'clock, when I went on duty as "orderly at headquarters"—an arrangement contrived by our bully top-sergeant for the sole purpose of getting one or two of us each day within reach of a real hot-water bath! As a duty, it was a joke. I carried two little messages between six and six-thirty, and the rest of the evening I was sitting up on the saloon deck, pretending I was sailing the high seas for the fun of it. Then (being still on duty), I turned in for the night in the saloon smoking room, and remained undisturbed until morning. But during the watches of the night I acquired that precious bath.

*Friday, April 19th*

When I woke up, the sea was more beautiful than I have ever seen it—all silver and steel-gray, with the crest of the waves pure white, and underneath the foam a strange blue-green—a composite of bottle-green and my childhood favorite pistachio ice cream. I stood there for twenty minutes on the deserted deck and watched the sea running. Later in the day, quite a blow came up, and the old tub started to roll all over the place. The boys seem to have gotten their sea legs very nicely, and they were all on deck this afternoon, watching the fun, and getting an occasional drenching for their temerity. I was among the unfortunates who managed to be in the way when we “shipped a sea,” but I didn’t get soaked through and rather enjoyed it. Later we changed our course and tonight the ship is rolling quite gently. I’ve been “in charge of quarters” this afternoon and evening, and so have been confined most of the time in the regions below decks. I’m rather puzzled at my appointment, because the man in charge of quarters is supposed to be a “non-com,” which I am not—yet. Mebbe that means that before long I’ll be a something better than an acting corporal. Here’s hoping—and gosh! how “Uncle Pete” will work if he does get it!

We may get a chance to go up and entertain the officers tomorrow night. I (even I) am a member of the Co. D Sextette, which holds forth on deck when the weather’s fine. I hope we go—and gee, how I hope they feed us!!

Well, the hour of nine is approaching, and nowadays to me that means bedtime, so good-night.

*Saturday, April 20th*

Today has been a holiday for me—and a strangely uneventful one, too, for a soldier on the high seas, speeding to the submarine zone. I’ve had not a single detail all day, and I’ve made the most of it. This morning the sea was quite rough and the sky overcast, but by drill-time it had cleared and calmed considerably. I had an interesting glimpse of the heterogeneousness of our National Army this morning, when I was lying on the hatchway

buried in the *Cathedrals of France*, and absorbing more than my share of cold, salt sea breeze. All at once a near neighbor, a perfectly drab-looking ordinary buck private, said, "Pardon me, but may I see the title of that book?" I showed it to him, and soon found that he was a deep student of architecture, a man of no small amount of culture. That, to me, is proving the most interesting part of my army experience—mingling with an endless horde of men, of all stations in life, and with interests, ambitions and abilities as widely scattered as leaves on the wind—all doing their "squads right" with varied thoughts. I opened up a new phase of a pleasant acquaintanceship last night. I've liked Pte. Schmitt of our company ever since I met him, but we've never exchanged anything more than the simplest comments on the weather and the aches incident to the captain's physical drill, or the size of our daily mail. Last night, however, we happened to get a bit below the surface, and to my joy and surprise I found him an artist of merit, a designer of jewelry, a devotee of music and the arts, and a fellow of very unusual perceptions. We'll see a good deal more of each other now. And to think that out of a hundred and seventy-two men, I've hardly "discovered" a dozen. Isn't that unexplored virgin ground enough for any dabbler in the verities?

But to come back to the day. We weren't invited to sing, and I'm just as glad, because from all I hear, the programme was very fine, and would have put us completely in the shade. So instead of warbling, I went in to see one of our fellows who is in the hospital, and was pleased to find him almost "like new." Then I went out and trod the deck for a half hour or so. The night is the most beautiful we've had yet; a waxing moon was bright enough tonight to show up all the other vessels in our troop—I wish I could tell you their names. You'd know some of them, I'm sure. The rest of the evening Schmitt, Clubley and I spent in scribbling foolish sketches and then I continued my efforts alone. As for bedtime—tonight's breeze and moon have chased all my sleepiness away, but, strange as it may seem (it's only eleven-thirty), it's coming

on me again. By the way, wish us luck, we are going to go scooting through the war zone illuminated by the brilliance of a *full* moon.

*Sunday, April 21st*

This has been a little more like Sunday than our last Sabbath on board, although the nearest I came to church was a class in elementary French. This morning dawned clear and cold. I hear we're out of the Gulf Stream—none of us knew we'd been in it until we went on deck and almost congealed. That's always the way—we don't appreciate our blessings until they're flown. Still, it was pretty "comfy" (with an overcoat) up on the deck in the sun, sprawled out on the canvas hatchway like a tiger rug on a hall floor. The catholicity of my taste in literature surprises even me—I've shifted from *Medieval Cathedrals* to *Mary Carstairs*, and I'm quite as absorbed as before. Then we had a band concert, too—quite fine, but not quite as "raggy" as one might have wished. We're nearing the danger zone now, and of course, the rumorists are beginning their work; every porpoise and bit of flotsam is a "submarine," and gathers an attentive crowd of watchers for a moment or two.

What *do* we do with our evenings? Well, of course, there's always the deck—but there's also our kennel in the hold, which is beginning to feel strangely like home. Most of us have been down there all the evening. Over in the far corner the bills and coins are flashing in a friendly poker game; behind me is the inimitable jargon of "craps" punctuated by the dice rolling on the table top; beside me is Schmitt, sketching a pencil portrait of Given, who, in turn, is chatting with Charlie Sorce, our little four-foot-ten Sicilian mascot; beyond them is a group engaged in conversation. During the instants when I have paused while writing this the subjects have been: (1) Life aboard ship; (2) Whether the East Indian races are further advanced in culture than we; (3) How the Pyramids were constructed; (4) What is the greatest thing in the world?—from which you may judge that in the space of ten minutes even a buck private can show considerable versatility. My good friend, Serg. Osterhus, ex-professor, is buried



in *Benvenuto Cellini*, while jolly Franchino, ex-furnace man, is struggling manfully with the *Seeds of the Righteous*. A dozen or so weary souls are already snoozing over our heads in hammocks, that swing creakingly with the motion of the ship. Until I started scribbling, our quartette was adding to the variety by indulging in close harmony of a sort—and there's your "Sammy" in the army. Do you wonder it's hard for the aid societies to classify him, find out what "his" likes and dislikes are, and what they can best do to help him? There isn't any "him"—it's "them" any way you play it. The National Army is not a thing that can be treated as an aggregation of units any more than could the City of New York. The leopard cannot change his spots—and it isn't reasonable to expect that a uniform is a rigid enough mold to fashion a man into a military pawn. It's on that basis, though, that these societies are working—and that's the thing the boys resent. Forgive the osophy—I'm addicted to osophies, as you may recall.

Now, I'm going to clamber up our two flights of nearly-ladders for a breath of air and a bit of clear-headed moonlit thought.

*Monday, April 22nd*

Today has been "just another day" in most respects. I've had my share of morning exercises, boat drill, mess, and *Mary Carstairs*—and I've finished her now, and am madly seeking to trade my precious volume for another. That's the way it works—there are twenty books in our quarters, and the only way you can be sure of having one is by the trading process. This afternoon the captain held a meeting for the "non-coms," to which, to my joy, acting "n. c's." were invited. It was just a general little talk about sprucing up our military manners when we struck the other side, but it was very well put, and the fellows took it all in with evident interest. We were also given the methods of distinguishing foreign officers; and speaking of officers, the captain intimated that promotion on the other side would be quick—very quick for those who earned it. I know one little ad-man who's going to struggle his army boots off to earn it. As the captain puts

it, it's not merely a question of priority, here as it is in the regular army. Men will get promotions as they grow up to them, and the fellow who shows that he has given all he has won't progress any further.

This evening Clubley and I have been up on the forward deck watching the waves. There's a very heavy sea running, and many of the waves tower far higher than our deck. Then the old hooker slides up to them, slips gently up the green, glossy side of the big roller, pauses for an instant on the crest, and toboggans madly down the other side, nearly always drenching some of the unwary who have selected an unlucky vantage point. The comments are, as usual, piquant. "I could make a million with this at Coney Island" got a laugh. Another voice in the crowd, as she slid up a big green slope, called out in the language of the morning exercises "In-n-hale!" Then, as she paused on the summit "Hol-ld it!" The whole crowd was ready in unison when the moment for "Ex-hale" came. Some of the other vessels in our convoy seem to be rolling quite as much as we, so we have at least a proxy opportunity to "see oursel's as ithers see us."

Rumor has it that we'll see port by Friday. O Rumor, be right for once, wontcha, old kid? We're soldiers, old fellow—not marines. Gee, I almost forgot. I was going up to the hospital to see Moran tonight. I think I'll say "*bonne nuit*," and chase up there now.

### *Tuesday, April 23rd*

Well, it's begun. At eleven o'clock this morning we reported for boat drill with life preservers on, and from that instant, it became a heinous crime to be seen without one on. We're allowed to sit on them at meals and sleep on them at night, but the rest of the time we *wear* them. And it certainly is funny to see the struggles of the kitchen police as they struggle up the steep companionways with pails and pans, crying "Gangway, Gangway!" in a hopeless sort of way. And on deck, with our overcoats buttoned outside them, we look for all the world like a lot of Dutch burgomasters out for an airing. You'd laugh to see how the fellows welcomed the belt

order. To them it spells, not approaching danger, but merely nearing that longed-for dry land—France or England—who knows?

*Wednesday, April 24th*

Oh, boy!—at last we've gotten into a real storm—a raging, tearing sou'easter that's whistling through the rigging, blowing things away and breaking over the deck in solid masses of green water—not mere spray. I stayed up on deck till they chased us all off, and now—it's three o'clock—we're all below, falling more or less over each other as the old hooker rolls and lurches from side to side. I've been on table duty again today—and as a result was beautifully sick again. However, it's all in the game.

Lieut. Harris has just come below to tell us how to recognize foreign officers. After that he'll conduct a French class. Our officers have been mighty good about leaving their comfortable quarters upstairs and coming down below here. A good many companies have seen their officers comparatively little since we left. (I had intended to end this day's journal without more ado, but there is an event to chronicle. I went to bed about seven and got up again about nine to get a breath of air before retiring for good. I stood with my friend Thornton at the top of the companionway looking out over the deck, watching the waves break over the side of the ship. Suddenly one big comber crashed against the starboard side of the ship with a heavy "Boom!" "Gosh," I said, "if we stay up here much longer, we're going to get wet" and I started down the two flights of stairs to our quarters. I arrived on the scene just in time to see the fag-end of a young panic. When the wave struck, someone called out "submarine!" and in two seconds the room was a mad-house—men rolling out of their hammocks on top of other men—others rushing for the stairs clutching their life preservers. Someone called "There's the bugle!" (purely imagination). Finally one hardy soul mounted a bench and yelled "Sit down, you blankety-blank fools! That was no 'sub'—it was a wave," and in five seconds it was all over but the post-mortems. But it gives one a scare



to think what conditions might have been like if a real torpedo had struck the ship. However, the little scare may be a blessed warning to the harebrained ones.

*Thursday, April 25th*

"Randy's" been pretty miserable today, and as a result hasn't much to report. The further I go on this voyage, the more fully I am convinced that I'd never have made a good sailor in the Navy.

This afternoon the boat-guard went (at last) on duty. The first shift went on at two o'clock, the second at four, and the third, one of which is your "Uncle Pete," went to work at six. It's eight now, and we've just been relieved, to go on again at midnight. This continues till the end of the voyage, which we're hoping will be mighty soon. There's a rumor that our hammocks are to be taken from us tomorrow. That may mean that we've only got one more night aboard—here's hopin'!

Our duties as guards are quite simple. There are four of us on duty—but I'm afraid if I were to describe our job I might be censored, so I guess I'll leave it to your cultured imagination.

*Friday, April 26th*

This has certainly been some day. I've been on boat-guard all day, and my eyes are pretty weary from constant use of the binoculars. We've been gazing pretty steadily, because the first fellow to sight a "sub" gets rewarded by the government—no small bonus, either. We had a little excitement this afternoon. All of a sudden, in response to a signal from somewhere, one of the destroyers turned about, raced back toward our rear, and shortly afterward we heard or rather felt the concussion of what we understood to have been a depth bomb. They must be very powerful, as I understand they do complete execution for two hundred yards around the spot where they explode. That's the only time we've really felt we were in the war zone. Tonight is perhaps the most remarkable I've ever seen—the sea is like a mirror, and a huge round red full moon has just risen. It's hard to realize that we're in the middle of a "sub"-infested ocean. And to think that

any minute twenty-four feet of hell may break through the side of this room. I can't realize it, and as by actual statistics the chances are 2700 to 1 against our getting hit, I don't think there's much sense in trying to picture such remote possibilities. However, it lends a tang to the little adventure.

As a result of a talk on censorship that our captain gave us today, I'm going to find it necessary to copy the first few pages of this screed, omitting some interesting, juicy bits from which Uncle Sammy fears the wily Hun might gather some advantage. I hate to chop up my diary, but orders is orders, same as "pigs is pigs." In the various small hiatuses that separate the incidents of our daily life, I have been reading voraciously. Today I picked up *The Seeds of the Righteous*, and tonight I finished it. Franchino may have liked it. I did. I've been thinking off and on about things back at home (and thank God I can do that without getting homesick).

Our hammocks *were* taken away, and tonight we're all sitting up. Before me is a funny scene. I can see Tolley writing a letter—Spencer shaving Durner, who is propped up quite comfortably against a life-preserver. The fellows at the next table are enjoying onion sandwiches—(stolen fruit). Beyond them there are groups, some playing poker, others at the ever-present "craps," a few are reading, while others are discussing the varied and various rumors that are floating around. The tales all seem equally authentic, but in spite of their infallibility the time of our arrival, as pictured by them, varies from ten this evening to three o'clock tomorrow afternoon. I hope to goodness one of them is right.

*Monday, April 29th*

We arrived safely at midnight day before yesterday at an English port, and the ship docked yesterday morning. Of course, the first thing I thought of was Plummer and the rest of them. Happening to be up in the captain's cabin on a message, I mentioned to him the fact that I had a brother here in England whom I had not seen in twelve years, and just wondered if it would be possible

to phone to him before we entrained. He said he did not know, but that he'd see what he could do. I thought no more of it, thinking that in the hurry of getting his company off the ship with the endless incidental details, he'd forget all about it. But Capt. Gillam's not that kind. When we got off the boat and lined up on the dock, I was called out of ranks, and the captain took a dollar from his own pocket, handed it to one of our lieutenants, told him to take Plummer's address, get the necessary English change, and phone him of our whereabouts and my presence, with the idea of letting him come and meet us at the station where we were to entrain. Well, he got the message and got to the station. I can't tell you how long a time he had to get there in, because that might betray where I was. Suffice it to say that he had not an instant to lose. And not only did he show up, but Peggy, too. She got there later by a few minutes, and incidentally just in time. The captain did everything on earth—even to sending one of our officers out with me to the barriers, so I could talk with them without having to worry about missing the train. Believe me, after that, there's very little I wouldn't do for Capt. Gillam—and because I was doing so much jumping in and out of ranks, the thing of course went round, and when I told the boys the story, it made a mighty profound impression.

From port we went by train to a "rest camp" at Folkestone. We are quartered in one of the former grand mansions. Of course, it's only temporary, and in a few days we will go elsewhere. Nobody knows where, but it is my opinion that before long I may be blamed glad I saw Plummer when I did. However, we may of course, go to an English training camp, in which case, I'd have a wonderful time. Plummer and S'Edie have launched a huge scheme to supply vacations in British homes for American soldiers on leave. The idea is to do for them what their own families can't do—and more important still, to foster the new growing spirit of understanding between the two nations. He'd been hobnobbing with Lord Balfour, the American consul, and other big wigs on the subject and is full of the work. Already they've had a lot of them to

entertain—they've been taking three a week at the Croft for several months. I think it's a wonderful idea, and one that will have a huge influence on Anglo-Saxon brotherhood after the war.

It was interesting to see the awakening of our fellows to the wonders of England as the train rolled through the wonderful country. First they—some of them—had the Yankee public-school attitude towards Britain, that you still occasionally find. It began to wear off first, I think, when they saw the English "bobbies"—and then the clean, spotless streets and houses—and then the marvelous country simply hypnotized them and now they can't rave enough about the place. This is one of the most beautiful spots I've ever seen in my life and though the houses are, of course, for the most part deserted, because it is out of season, the lawns and gardens are ablaze with grass and flowers—it's a garden spot for fair.

I'm feeling fine, although of course, tired from the trip. I expect to do a lot of "policing up" (military jargon for all sorts of cleaning, mending and sprucing) in the next noons, and so may be very busy during our brief "rest."

You never saw anything like the determination of the people over here to win the war. They're all perfectly healthy despite the rationing, and they work like fury. Every square inch—golf courses, front lawns, railway rights of way—gardens everywhere, and all beautifully kept and green with that English green you don't find anywhere else. Because I've been over before, I'm asked about everything from the coinage to the lease-hold system of land owning—and I'm surprised to find how much of it I remember.

Please send me as much hard chocolate (preferably Baker's eating chocolate) as you can buy. It's awfully hard to get over here. And keep on numbering your letters. I'm beginning with this to number mine. I wrote you yesterday—that was No. 1, although I didn't number it. Please don't worry if letters are infrequent. I'll try not to let them be, but Y. M. C. A.'s are packed, you only get just so much paper, and from what I foresee, our time will be still more limited. Incidentally, mails are irregular.

I've heard nothing about the rumor that soldiers can have packages sent them only by written request. So send me whatever occurs to you, but especially chocolate.

Give my love to everybody, and tell them all for the love of Uncle Sam to write me oodles of letters without expecting a return in kind, because that is absolutely impossible.

*Wednesday, May 1st*

Here we are again in a different place! We left England yesterday, and landed before long at a French port. We spent last night at a sort of "just-arrived" camp near the seacoast. We're still there this morning, and probably will be for a day or so, while we hand back to the Government practically all the equipment that they carefully issued to us back at home! At least that's the rumor. They say that we can take away from here only such stuff as we can carry. None of us know where we go from here—we're just sitting, waiting. We do know, though, that France is verra, verra cold, and the barrack floor (there are no bunks) is verra, verra hard. I've learned, though, that with a little effort one can conjure up a bed on a hard floor that is very comfortable. Mine last night was composed of four blankets, an overcoat, a slicker, a half of a shelter tent and two suits of underclothes! The overcoat, tent and underclothes made a mattress, the slicker a pillow, and the blankets were used as per usual. One of our officers remarked yesterday to a Britisher "It's very cloudy and misty today, isn't it?" "Yes," said the Tommy, "and we're bloomin' glad of it, because the Germans bomb this camp every clear night." So we were quite satisfied to have it stay cloudy. Hun aeroplanes are probably pretty bum shots, but they might drop one down our necks by accident, y'know!

We all hated like fury to leave ——. As I told you, it's what is called a "rest camp," where you do no drilling and no work. The food, cleaning up and all that is looked after by Allied soldiers who have recovered from wounds and been assigned to light duty. We went down and "did the town," visited all the stores and almost laughed



ourselves into hysterics—going to the “draper’s” for handkerchiefs, to the “ironmonger’s” for scissors, to the “chemist’s” for a shaving brush, and all that. The British were all just as decent to us as they could be, and the fellows left England with a very different viewpoint on England and the British from the one most of them had when they landed. — is a very interesting place—the most beautiful resort I’ve ever seen. Every house is a mansion, and as for the esplanade along the water—*mais quoi donc—magnifique!* Then in the early evening Asbury and I took a long tramp all through the lower, older, poorer and more interesting part of town, even as far down as old, — where we found the most fascinating picturesqueness of all. One little streetlet was little more than a pathway, though paved and guttered just like a toy boulevard. Crooked as an elbow, and slanting skyward from the water’s edge, it was lined with quaint old shops and houses, and thronged with the most polyglot cosmopolitan horde you ever saw—old fishermen that seemed to have hopped out of a romance—queer old ladies and pretty English girls—and soldiers of every sort and kind—Belgians, English, French, Canadian and our own—and such a riot of color and style you never saw—no two soldiers of the Allied armies seem to dress alike—some had service stripes, others insignia of office and others special designations that made the sight a brilliant one. And over it all, silhouetted in brilliant blue against the jagged edge of the haphazard roof-lines, was a brilliant sky that seemed more like my idea of an Italian than an English one.

On our travels we saw many things from car windows, but I think the most interesting to me was — Cathedral. Gosh, what I’d have given to have gotten out and explored it!

Well, now, I must skip and sort out my clothes in case they *do* decide to take ’em away from us. Goodbye—just now.

*Tuesday, May 7th*

Today we started real work! We didn’t stop all day—drill, hike, races—and then the first of our instruction in handling gas-masks. O-o-oh! How we’re going to swear


at that mask—and a little later how we'll bless it! The thing grips the end of your nose like a vise, grasps the edges of your face in a clasp that leaves a beautiful red picture-frame around your visage—to breathe you have to blow in and out through a rubber mouthpiece, a long tube and a box of chemicals. Oh, it's a sweet little toy! And we're going to get an hour of him every day!

*Sunday, May 12th*

You may imagine how busy I've been when I tell you that for five days I've actually had too little time to write in my little diarette! We've been having first call at 5:45, reveille at six, breakfast shortly after, machine gun class at eight, lasting until the very instant of noon mess—then the same thing all afternoon until about four—after which we are rewarded for our day's labor by being permitted to play with the jolly little gas-masks for an hour! Then, with smutty noses (which besides being blackened by the rubber are also pinched red by the bulldog grippers that hold the nostrils closed) we trot off to evening mess—after which Asbury and I, usually with Sergt. Ford also, go tripping off to the village to enjoy our supper of eggs, coffee and whatever else we can scare up. The work with the machine guns is becoming very interesting, although I can't quite agree that a whole day of it without interruption for drill, hikes or exercise is good for the men. I presume, though, that the powers that be are planning to give us more strenuous physical exercise in some form that will help us in studying the gun, such as field manoeuvres—and that by absorbing a maximum of knowledge in a minimum of time, they'll be able to get better results from those later studies.

We are working under experienced British "non-coms," who have all seen a lot of service with the Vickers, and have spent many months in study as well. The gun is a marvel!

Imagine if you can a machine that shoots six hundred shots a minute, that has over five hundred parts, which, nevertheless, can be taken entirely apart with a screw-driver and one other tool! Every part has a name, too—big pieces and little pieces—and we all laughed our heads

off when the instructor showed us the "Side Lever Axis Bush Split Keeper-Pin." Here is a picture of it—actual size :  There's one man somewhere in England or France for whom I have a profound respect. He's the fellow who named the parts of that gun! Mr. Pullman would pay him handsomely, I'm sure, for christening sleeping cars!

We had a bit of excitement the other night. I'm sorry to say that thanks to my blanket-pins and the sleeping-bag that I've made with 'em, I slept all through it!—but Thornton was outside and saw it all. There was an air raid somewhere within a very few miles, and the search-lights, he says, could be seen plainly sweeping the clouds looking for the Fokkers. He heard the rattle of the planes' machine guns and the noise of anti-aircraft fire from below. Then one of the "Fritzies" dropped two bombs. Nobody knows where they fell, and no report has come in of their having done any damage, but they shook our buildings and woke up a number of the fellows. Evidently I must be sleeping well. I can't tell whether I am or not, though, because from the time my head strikes my improvised pillow until that thrice-accursed bugle peal hits my ear, I don't know a thing! So I may be sleeping abominably—I'll have to sit up some night and find out (!).

We were paid day before yesterday (Friday), and it was a circus! They had nothing but French money, of course, and as I understand it, paid each man to the nearest half-franc. I got seventy-five francs, which will come in handy, believe me, as my change was about exhausted. However, if the allotment comes through, remember your old pal and slip me a little "kale." It comes in very handy "over there." If I said too much on the subject it might be censored.

This week I've received letters No. 1, 2, 4 and 5. That leaves 3 and 6 still to come. I got No. 7 at Camp Upton—and I hope, of course, that by this time Nos. 8 to 48 are on their way—and all fat!

Last night all our joyful gloating over being machine gunners came to an end. They've issued us rifles—and now instead of being better off than the infantry, we're



"out o' luck," as the camp saying goes, with rifles *and* machine guns to clean!—*and* to carry—whoopee!!

And as squad leader I'm now the guardian of one Vickers .303 Water-cooled Automatic Machine Gun, one Mark IV Tripod, one case containing spare barrel, ramrod, etc., one box of spare parts, one wire rack, one leather carrying case, one condenser pipe, one water bag, fourteen ammunition boxes, one signal rocket pistol and a dozen or so other odds and ends that I can't recall just now—*and* that thrice-confounded rifle! The copy-book says "The good soldier loves his gun and takes good care of it." That's me—I love my Vickers, but oh, you rifle! However, when we're out in a shell crater some day and some blooming "Jerry's" whizbang ties the barrel of my machine gun into a few knots, I suppose I'll be glad enough of the other gun's friendly companionship! Several days ago my squad had the none-too-pleasant job of keeping the mess-hall in order for the day. I certainly was proud of my fellows! They not only worked like troopers all day, but when at the close of the evening's clean-up they were handed a huge mess of potatoes to peel, they never batted an eye! It's great to see the bunch getting together and sticking by each other—getting squad spirit. Not a man in the squad has been absent or late at a formation since we've been in the camp—and four out of the seven had just recently completed "hard labor" terms for "absence without leave"! But now they're working like Trojans, and shave, shine their shoes and keep their unruly locks tamed just so that the squad will look "up to snuff" at formations. They proved themselves yesterday afternoon, when for the first time we had real gas-mask work. We *drilled* for over a half-hour with our masks on! We couldn't see, breathe or hear a great deal at the end of the half hour, and so the drill was a more or less haphazard affair. But when we took off our masks and looked around, we found that our squad was the only one that hadn't gotten mixed up! They're drilling on the gun to beat the band, too! In fact, I think that pretty soon we'll have the best squad of them all. I sure hope so.

Today has been a very peaceful Sunday for me. I went to church this morning with Ford, Clubley and a few others. Then Asbury and I found another delicious dinner, although we had to wait till 'most three o'clock for it. Since then I've been spending most of the time scrivening my doings when according to all the laws and the prophets I should be studying the parts and operation of the Vickers .303 Water-cooled Automatic Machine Gun!

*Monday, May 13th*

All day we toiled on the Vickers—drill, mechanism, stoppages, parts, belt-filling—and the further we go into it, the greater becomes my respect for these British boys who are acting as our instructors. They know the gun like a book—in fact, better than a book—and yet they're obviously not expert mechanics drawn from the highly trained parts of civil life. No, they're just ordinary "Tommies"—corporals and lance-corporals for the most part—but they've learned the gun in action on the firing line and they *know* it. Almost all of them wear one, two or three wound-stripes on their sleeves, but they all look good for more action—which fact is encouraging, to say the least!

In the afternoon it got muddy, so we had our lecture indoors—which was thoughtful of our officers, now that we have only one suit of clothes to our names!

*Tuesday, May 14th*

This morning at mess, Asbury came over and whispered mysteriously to me—"I've found a chocolate-mine." *That* was an event, because around this neck of the woods chocolate is almost an unknown luxury—chiefly because when a supply comes into the canteens, there's a wild riot, and when the smoke clears away, and the non-football playing members of the company get up to the counter, the chocolate is sold out.

So after retreat, Asbury and I (of course, I call him "Raspberry") trotted down to a neighboring village, and got to the "chocolate-mine"—which happened this time to be a British Canteen—before the crowd. As a result,

we now have "*du Chocolat*"—and all the way home we were gloating over the late-comers whose buttons would probably be torn off in the rush. I remember very plainly the button I lost in a canteen rush in England. But this time I got my delicacies in peace. So much for having the "inside dope"! That and rumors are the chief sources of interest in the army. "Washroom rumors" will supply you in five minutes with enough misinformation to keep the *New York Journal* filled for weeks!

Today we started on a new era in our culinary department. Our field kitchens are erected, and the cooks no longer have to depend on the insufficient camp kitchen. The result is that once more the boys are praising the "chow." The only other event of interest was an exhibition machine gun drill given by our instructors. They call it "T. O. E. T."—Test of Elementary Training—and we'll probably get it next week. All *that* did for us was to show us how much we had to learn!

*Wednesday, May 15th*

Today has been a big day indeed! And the day didn't really begin until "quittin' time." During the day we went through our regular routine of drills, and had our first touch of real summer warmth. As we lined up for our mess at about five o'clock, Sergt. McKeown passed me and whispered, "You'll probably be made a corporal tonight or tomorrow." I signified my enthusiastic thanks and on the strength of that went in and ate a hearty supper of bread and butter, jam, cheese and coffee—plenty of all of 'em! Then, as I was standing in line once more, this time to wash my mess-kit (you spend two thirds of your time in the army standing in line for some reason or other), he passed again and whispered, "That order just went through, Corporal." That was excitement enough for one day—but wait! After that we learned that the company was to be blessed with a bath, and in order that no priceless daylight hours would be wasted, the company was to march to the village with gas-masks on, for marching practice, to get accustomed to the masks. So as your "Corp. Pete" lined up with the company, with his soap, towel, clean "undies" and socks under his arm, his gas-

mask slung over his shoulder, up steps our prince of a "top-kick" once more. "Drop out, Corporal," quoth he—just-like-that—"Corporal." "Yessir,"—sez I, and I drops out, I does, resigned to, if not ecstatic at, the prospect of remaining dirty for yet another day. When my boss returned, he advised me that I was to be one of the Corporals of the Guard! And me a two-hours'-old Corp. without so much as a chevron on me! That was bad enough, but *attendez un moment!* When my trick came—nine till one—things began happening. About ten o'clock or so the searchlights began prowling around in the almost cloudless sky, making strange brilliances where they struck bits of cloud, and fading off into nothing as they neared the waxing moon. Soon the first "Boom" of the anti-aircraft guns sounded, far off, and almost at the same instant my guards blew their three-whistle air-raid signal. Then I was busy! Seeing that all lights went out in a jiffy, calling the officer of the day, and scouting around to instruct my sentries. Then for a while I watched the raid in peace (!). The affair wasn't particularly near us, and there was practically no danger to the camp, because the only things the "Jerries" are after are railways, cross-roads, bases, villages and the like—none of which we have to offer. However, several times "Jerry" got near enough so that we could hear the distinctive whiz of his motor, so different from the sound of the British planes. And the searchlights! They seemed to be everywhere, crossing and criss-crossing each other in the sky, star-shells rising, shrapnel bursting here and there in the distance, and the intermittent booming of the anti-aircraft guns. Once or twice we could feel a slight tremor of the ground as a Hun bomb struck the earth somewhere within a few miles. Well, there I was, watching the finest part of the show, when suddenly I was accosted by a corporal who had a prisoner for me. Prisoners are a very rare affair indeed here, and in fact, the "bril" was locked and there wasn't any key! So off again trots Corp. "Randy" to find the officer of the day, and he and I together to find the British commanding officer of our little camp, to get the key. Finally we got the prisoner to bed, the lights became

dimmed, the firing ceased, "Jerry" went his way and left "Randy" alone with his thoughts. And they were pleasant thoughts, too—thoughts of how much it's going to mean to all of us to have been out here, to have seen what we've seen and done what we've done—the knowledge of the main thing that it's going to give us—seeing men live, away from the influences that have had their share in building up our civilization—I mean woman, home, the family, constructive effort, the thing called society—all that. Those things no longer act on men out here, as they do at home, to prop them up, strengthen weak resolves and keep them tamed. Out here a man is nothing more than what he brings with him *inside* himself—and that's why the study is so interesting. Some men are found to be all veneer—others—lots of them—find their very best, strongest selves—an ego that in many cases even they themselves have never known before—underneath the shell that has covered them all their lives.

Incidentally, there isn't a man who has a home to go to when it's all over, who won't go there after the war with a new appreciation of what it is, and of what it means to him.

*Thursday, May 16th*

As I write this, I'm sitting out in front of the guard house, on a nice, comfy bench, with a big table in front of me, and a broad stretch of beautiful country before me. In both directions the road stretches away, guarded on each side by tall trees. I feel for all the world like a general in front of his headquarters, my only difficulty being the lack of assistants! A general would surely have a few "stenogs," orderlies, telegraphers and sitch, while I—poor little I—have but a Waterman. Still, I don't think I'd care to be a general, even for the privilege of sitting in the sunlight of old France—no, not even if I had *two* suits of clothes and an orderly to shine my boots!

Well, after much fuss and to-do about getting away, eight would-be-clean soldiers kited off down the road to the village for a bath. I never thought that a bath was a luxury until I went without one—but now,—gosh! Without a moment's hesitation we trot three miles 'cross-country, miss supper at camp, carry our clean clothes—all for



the privilege of standing under a home-made shower that trickles first boiling, then hot, then tepid, and at last icy water in a two-inch stream down your back, as the water in the little tank on the roof gets lower and lower. But oh, what a joy that bath was! While we waited, Randy slipped off to the farm where dwells "*Madame Pommes-de-Terre*." Sometimes she's "*Madame Seulement-des-oeufs-ce-soir*," but this time she had everything—eggs, potatoes, bread, coffee, cream, sugar—*que voulez vous?* So "Randy" ordered dinner for eight, and after our bath we had a feast. Almost early Roman luxury, eh, what?

Then we walked home—and no sooner had we gotten into the barracks than our platoon sergeant hurled a wet sponge in on our ebullient joy—the news that we were all to be ready at 6:45 A. M. the next day, with full packs, helmets and gas-masks—rifles, too! ready to hike cross-country to the gas-school for a dose of chlorine gas. We didn't mind the gas—but to wake, dress, stand reveille, shave, wash, roll a pack, make up a bunk (even a bunk that is merely floor plus blanket!), stand in line for breakfast, eat, stand in line to wash mess-kit, then wash it, get that eighty pounds of junk safely and comfortably on your back and rush out to formation between 5:50 and 6:45 is *some* job! And about forty out of the company failed—and had kitchen police jobs awarded to them. I was out in time—but I confess, I licked my mess-kit!

### *Friday, May 17th*

Oh, by the way, among other things, in that India-rubber fifty-five minutes, I got Napoli to sew on my chevrons in addition to all the other jobs enumerated above! Then we hiked—and by the time we got to the gas-house we were the most wilted company you ever saw. Dripping with perspiration—our unfamiliar guns slung in every sort of way as their owners sought an elusive moment of comfort—limestone dust on shoes and leggins—we were a fine-looking bunch of world-beaters! We went into the gas-house in bunches of thirty, and stood around with our masks on while the instructor opened a tank and allowed some vapor to escape. I didn't smell a thing! Then we went outside, and there, when the masks were

ordered off, we could plainly smell the remnants of the gas in our helmets and on our clothes—but the old mask sure did keep it out!

The captain was kind enough to let us march home without wearing our coats, so we didn't quite suffocate! But it was some hike, nevertheless. In the afternoon we had two machine gun classes—the first a lecture on *camouflage!* Four guns were hidden by our instructors on a hill-side a few hundred yards away—and we couldn't spot a single one of them! So much for protective coloration and the art of keeping still. Then we had our Test of Elementary Training—gun drill against time—and I'm very glad to say that practically my whole squad, Corp. "Pete" included, were promoted to "A" Class and will start advanced drill Monday. At four o'clock, to our intense surprise, they told us we'd have no more work. Nowadays a free hour is a treat indeed for us, even when we spend it, as did most of the boys this time, in scrubbing clothes, shaving, or cleaning guns!—so you may be sure we grinned. After mess I had my hair cut—and I did wish for a camera! You'd have seen "Randy" with his coat off and collar turned in, a khaki handkerchief of uncertain history around his neck—perched on a barber's chair, which consisted of eight bricks piled on top of each other. Kneeling behind me was good old Conboy, of the Fighting Third Squad—the finest fellow of the lot, who before the war was a conductor on a Buffalo-Angola trolley car—his scissors and razor and a canteen of cold water were the sum total of his accoutrements, but he gave me a bully fine hair-cut just the same!

*Saturday, May 18th*

O, Mr. Anathema! How I needed your assistance this morning! With your aid I could probably have expressed myself fully when the buglers of B Co. woke the whole camp an hour early this morning—at the unearthly hour of 4:50 A. M.! They had to start off early on a hike or something—and it never occurred to them that in a pocket edition of a "camp" like ours, a bugle blast at daybreak was no respecter of persons—that it would crash in alike on the sleeping ears of the just and the unjust, too—the

just being ourselves and the unjust the "B" Co. outfit, who thereby did us out of an hour's slumber. We went this morning to a neighboring bit of practice trench system, where we practiced mounting our machine guns on rough ground. That's lots of fun. We take a gun team out to some point and send the rest of the section a number of yards away. Then the gun team has to get behind cover, drag up and erect the gun, and get it trained on the others fellows without being seen.

Then in the afternoon we had more drill on the camp parade ground, after which Conboy and I went to town to arrange for our squad dinner, a little affair in honor of my promotion. I thought that was the least I could do for them after they'd stood by me so well when I was only an acting corp. "Con" and I had success beyond our dreams. *Mademoiselle*—my usual egg-cooking friend—was dee-lighted, and all would be ready at *sept heures et demie*—and at the appointed hour the squad was there too, fortified, it's true, by the camp's evening meal, but ready, as all American soldiers seem to be, for another one.

As we entered the red-tiled room adjoining the spotless kitchen, I saw that *Mademoiselle* had done even better than her promise. A tablecloth—two plates each—and even a big bunch of lilacs on the table! For dinner we had four fried eggs apiece, loads of French fried potatoes, sardines, bread (which we took with us), English crackers, apple jelly, chocolate, and *du vin blanc*. It was a very jolly affair, and we sang songs and raised quiet Cain to our hearts' content. At 9:10 we had to start back for camp. This we did marching in regular squad formation, except that we put "Hop" Ashley out in front to act as drum-major. Ashley, before he was a soldier, was captain of the bell-boys in the Iroquois Hotel! His antics kept us in such convulsions that we could hardly sing! Of course, before we could get to sleep "Jerry" had to come over, drop a few bombs in the vicinity and be duly shot at himself. I'll be glad when this moon wanes, although we're all getting used to them now. In fact, last night I went to sleep right in the middle of the blamed affair, with the anti-aircraft guns peppering the sky and the searchlights sweeping all over the place!



*Sunday, May 19th*

I'm writing this in a perfectly idyllic meadow of green grass, with millions of buttercups and daisies sprinkled all about me. A dozen cows are grazing around me, and over there on the path a British officer is tickling one old Bossy with his swagger stick. I'm propped up against a huge old tree—Asbury is asleep beside me—a little spider is crawling over the sheet as I write—but would I interrupt him? Nay—the blood of the fighting Clan Campbell rebels at such a deed! Off in the distance a British bugle is playing an unfamiliar call. In two directions I can hear church-bells calling the faithful to mass—and in one more direction I can hear a more sinister sound—the booming of the cannon at the front. Here comes a group of British horsemen, followed by two American and one French officer, all mounted. Behind them comes a lumbering old cart, and on it *Monsieur* and *Madame* in their Sunday best—and two little boys decked out in frills and laces that are almost ludicrous against the workaday background of the cart. Yet it's typical of France today—France sorely hurt, of course, but France wearing a smile and a jaunty bit of lace on her gown—France, where *Madame* of the *Grande Maison* takes in washing these days, perhaps, but doesn't neglect to shine the brasses and keep fresh the geraniums in the curtained window. And do you know, I think it's just that sort of thing that has sustained her through all her troubles?

Asbury is stirring—I'll have to feed him a piece of sandy French chocolate and put him to sleep again. There goes the Sanctus bell at the old church—and with it, almost at the same instant come the recurring sound of the British bugle, the whiz of a plane overhead, the deeper boom of heavy guns, the mooing of a cow, and once more, the peaceful, even snore of my friend Asbury. Isn't it a funny, mixed-up world I'm living in? But it's doing things for me that I never could have done for myself.

*Monday, May 20th*

Here we are, off on one more week of our student life—getting each day more confident of our progress, and surer

of our ultimate success with the old Vickers. I'm also becoming very much more hopeful that the Second Platoon will prove itself the star outfit of the company. We've been running without a platoon commander since Lieut. Ethridge was transferred to other duty. But recently a new officer, Lieut. Reardon, has been attached to the platoon, we hope permanently. He's a young fellow, and I believe has earned his commission on this side of the water. And believe me, he *earned* it! He's got that rare thing, magnetism—and because he knows exactly what he's doing, the fellows respect him. I hope we keep him!

Thank goodness, we started again today with an hour of physical exercise! After retreat, "Raz" and I wandered down to the village and back, and talked about everything under the sun—and once more, on our return, we were greeted with the news of a big day to come. Packs, rifles, helmets, gas-masks, helmets, machine guns and helmets—off on a hike to the range.

*Monday, May 20th. Letter to P&L*

Your letter came in a day or so ago, in company with a *Peanelogram*, a letter from Juenker, and nine other letters from mother and friends. Gosh! That windfall was just like a breath of the good old U. S. A.

From all we can hear in here now, the Third Loan went across with a bang. I'd certainly like to have been in on that proposition, although after all the space we had at our disposal last time, anything less would have been pretty hard to stand. By the way, one of our fellows got a newspaper from some small town, that had the old "Kaiser Captures New York" ad in it, advertising the Third Loan. But in this case it was on the very front page of the paper!

Don't for goodness' sake get the idea that I'm not interested in the things that go on at the office. There's nothing that interests me quite as much as P&L—and it's pretty hard to lose an interest as vital as that—even when you're busy on a machine gun twelve hours a day, with nothing but eating-time taken out.

As for colds—I've certainly been lucky. I haven't had a cold since I left Camp Upton—and heaven knows I'd

get one if there were any germs waiting around trying to get me! Camp life here is just one long day's work after another. We start at 5:50 A. M. and don't quit till 6:20 P. M.—and all that time we spend studying the Vickers gun. We have one hour a day on gas-mask duty, learning how to use them under various conditions. All the rest of our time we spend on the gun, studying mechanics, drill, stoppages, stripping the gun, cleaning it—everything conceivable. We're working under British "non-coms," all of whom have seen service at the front, and believe me, they know that gun! It's going to be a mighty short time now before we, too, will know it—and then we'll go after the old Hun. I think he's expecting us, because the old boy comes around every clear night in his bloomin' flying machine and throws bombs around the neighborhood.

I'm going to close this letter now because "Lights out" time has come. I haven't given good measure, I know, for the fine long one you sent me. But our time is so very limited that I'm just about kept busy writing my "diary-letter." And whenever you get a chance, drop me a line—tell me all about the little things, too!

And did I tell you they made me a corporal the other day?

P. S.—Where's *The Propeller*?

*Tuesday, May 21st*

Well! This has been a real day! It started this morning with the rolling of our packs, and the usual nice job we poor corporals get, of assigning the heavy gun and tripod to members of the squad to carry, without getting anybody peeved! Then came the hike—only a short one, fortunately, to a beautiful spot along the main road, where the road itself went through lowlands, with broad, grassy banks on each side. On one of these we camped, while our instructors taught us the fine points of the Vickers. Then came lunch—and quite a novelty it was, served for the first time since we've been over here from a field kitchen on a wagon drawn up at the side of the road. Oh, how good that pork and beans, that hard tack and coffee all tasted, out there in the sunlight!

Then we went out on the range, to fire the gun the first time. O-o-oh! my ears are ringing yet, and when I whistle,

the sound doesn't sound like whistling at all! But the work was fascinating, and right in the middle of the afternoon the biggest event of all took place—we had a visit from the Commanding General of all the British Armies—General Sir Douglas Haig. He came with his staff, in six big automobiles—they drove right by us to the far end of the range. The General passed within four feet of me, and I had a very good look at him. He's a very distinguished looking man, and the burden of war, while it shows plainly on his face, has taken nothing from the power and poise that you can always see in his pictures. And you can pass this around to your Buffalo friends—the General rode in a Pierce-Arrow!

Serg. McKeown overheard part of the General's conversation with Sir Douglas. The General inquired what branch of the service Capt. Gillam was in before. "civilian," replied the captain, at which the General showed much surprise. "But where did you get that poise—that chest—that commanding voice?" demanded Sir Douglas. The captain modestly didn't know. I think General Haig will remember Capt. Gillam—and I know blamed well we'll remember him—and his snappy-looking staff, attired in their faultless red-trimmed khaki uniforms.

After our practice was over, we had evening mess—coffee, bread, jam and lots of very good cheese—"seconds," too, for those who wanted them. I don't know how it is that we get so much more to eat on the road than we do in camp!

Then we very wisely came home and went to bed.

*Wednesday, May 22nd*

This morning at 7:30, we started off on a tactical trip. Our officers were given a map, and told to go to 27 E 48G, or something like that—and to get their men there at nine o'clock and in as good condition as possible. We got there in very good time, too, although the road led straight upward all the way. When we finally reached our destination, we found a most beautiful spot—a rolling glade, covered with close-cropped grass (cropped by sheep, not machinery!), and guarded on all four sides by trees. The whole forms a sort of plateau, from which the view is

marvelous—hills, woods, farms and villages as far as the eye can reach. And there, nestling down in a pit, was the emplacement of one of the big searchlights we see sweeping the sky when “Jerry” comes calling o’ nights.

We spent the day in various sorts of machine gun work—“rough-ground drill” (mounting the gun on uneven surfaces)—and what is most fun of all, “use of ground and cover.” In this little pastime, three men go off with the gun and tripod, while the rest turn their backs. Then the three drop down behind some tiny, hardly noticeable rise in the ground, and the remaining fellows are ordered to turn round and watch. The three then crawl along the ground, mount the gun on the tripod, and get a “bead” on the watching group—and the object of the game is to do all this without being seen! It’s surprising to a layman how completely three men and a gun can be hidden behind a little rise in the ground a couple of hundred yards away—a rise so slight that when you’re on the spot where the gun is, you think “Why, this is idiotic—they *must* be able to see us!” Well, they can’t if you stay low enough, but you’ve got to Bb, all right!

Again today we had two meals out in the open, and it was certainly great! The grass is soft and beautiful there, and there’s plenty of shade—in short, it’s really too pleasant to be strictly military.

But oh, what a hot walk home! When we got there we were fagged out and drenched with perspiration. I shed my clothes and indulged in a cold-water “splash-bath,” after which I felt lots better. Then “Raz” and I went to the village and claimed our clean clothes, and being pretty tired, returned at once and hied us to our downy couches (*camouflage* conversation for “pine-plank flops”).

*Thursday, May 23rd*

Once again today we hiked off to our greensward plateau—but today, instead of sweltering heat, we had an almost too invigorating breeze. We had an hour of quite novel physical exercise, followed by the day’s machine gun work. Then followed an athletic meet between the three platoons, the winning team being rewarded by the promise of getting relieved of duty in the “butts” at the



range tomorrow. They need sixty D Co. men in the pits to mark up the targets as the men of A, B, and C Cos. have their practice. Well of course, as usual, the First Platoon won—they have all the athletes, but not brains like the Second Platoon! So tomorrow the Second and Third go out to do the battalion's dirty work! When we got home tonight, Lieut. Reardon remarked that he had never seen a company march better. That made me feel pretty good, I can tell you—but then—*then* the mail was passed out, and I got 26 letters! That made me feel like a young colt, and I sat up reading 'em all, long after the rest of the hut was snoring. Running strictly in line with my old-time form, I use up more candles than all the rest of the hut put together! I got your letters up to May 4th, with none lacking. I'll answer them all in a "questions-and-answers" letter today or tomorrow. I also heard from *The Propeller*, the *Peanelogram* and one or two others. It was great, I tell you! I went to bed at about 7:45, and read by candle-light till about ten, and just barely finished skimming through them. They made me sleep like a top—oh, no, I don't mean that at all—it sounds as if I was accusing them of being soporifics! No, but they gave me such a satisfied feeling that sleep was a cinch.

### *Friday, May 24th*

I've been writing up the last day or so of my "diary-letter" during the last hour and a half. It's now 11:20, and I think I'll be able to complete the story of this half day before lunch. It's a sad story, though! We started off this morning—the Second and Third Platoons, with small packs, gas-masks, helmets and raincoats on, to go to our job on the range. It was very threatening when we left, and indulged in a mud-encouraging downpour once or twice on the road. However, we continued, and entered the "butts." Gosh, I never dreamed that the "behind-the-scenes" of a rifle range was such a muchness. Regular trenches, with corrugated iron roofs, lookout posts, storage dugouts for targets, poles with red flags on 'em, tie frames for the targets—all sorts of contraptions—and all looking very muddy, sinister and quite satisfactorily military in

the rain. Capt. Gillam put me in charge of the telephone, which, after some search, I found—a field phone in a leather bag, kept in the hut of the range-warden—and attached it to its proper plug. But I had no chance to prove my prowess, because we got the order “No practice—start back!” Then we started to undo all the work which we had done—took down targets, phone, flags and all that—and at the same time old Jupiter Pluvius decided that he’d been shirking a bit, so he started to pour rain on us in buckets! When we got home, we were drenched! So now here I am, in our hut, with the rain pouring outside, my slicker hung up, dripping, my socks, shoes and underclothes—and my *only* pants hung up—also dripping, while I, in a dry suit of underclothes and my O. D. shirt, am lying in my blankets on the floor, writing to you. A Vickers machine gun spare parts box is my table—a candle on a jam-tin is my light—and there you are!

*Sunday, May 26th*

Today is the anniversary—the three-months’ anniversary—of the day we left Buffalo for the wilds of Long Island—and by way of celebration, we’re starting out on the hardest job we’ve tackled since we changed our title from “Mr.” to “Pte.” We started out at six-thirty this morning on the first lap of a three-day military manoeuvre. The “plan of campaign” has been handed to the officers, and the necessary maps of the supposititious campaign as well. Using these maps, the officers (this time mounted) led the company ‘cross-country to a certain large town, which we’ll call *Avril*, because that isn’t its name. The “book of the play”—that is, the typewritten sheets giving the supposed situation—demanded that the 306th Machine Gun Battalion and one other machine gun unit take over a series of support lines behind the “first-line trenches.” These trenches are to be held by the infantry regiments of our division. (I forgot to mention that this is a divisional manoeuvre, and that our battalion merely plays its own small part in carrying out the plan.)

The plan demanded that we arrive at a certain point at a specified time, and so the company was lined up in company front at 7:30. But as luck would have it, other



companies were not so prompt, so the movement didn't begin until nine. The fellows carried full packs—about eighty pounds, with an overcoat roll on top of that—gas-masks, helmets and rifles—some load! Unfortunately, the order demanding our presence at the appointed place and hour took no account of delays in starting, the result was the most exhausting hike I've ever been through. We had a short rest after the first three quarters of an hour, but for the next two hours and ten minutes, nothing but tramp-tramp-tramp over that sun-baked, dusty highway, faces streaming with perspiration under those delightful tin hats. We came to the outskirts of the large town I mentioned; passed a cool-looking canal and a Red Cross receiving station; tired fellows thought, "Well, surely we'll stop here." But no; on we tramped, through the streets of the town which we're calling *Avril*. It's a British supply base, and a very busy one, two canal boats unloading supplies, long trains of motor lorries ready to start off to the front line, cannon, some new and bright, just on its way out to the trenches, others old, mud-stained and worn, ready to go back to a rejuvenating base. The village itself is picturesque, with the canal running through it, the quaint old buildings—many of them boarded up as a protection against bombs—the curious contrast of huge lumbering lorries and jaunty little donkey carts, and over all, the dark mass of the cathedral towering—a majestic pile it is, too, though probably unknown to the connoisseur of cathedral architecture.

But did we rest? Nay, and again no—on we tramped, through the streets, past the busy section, beyond the one or two factories, beyond the dregs of the town and out into the country again. Here we came to the foot of a long, long hill—a hill that seemed endless to our fagged-out energies. Finally, of course, on our nerve, we reached the top, and were given the blessed "fall out" as we came to the fringe of the *Bois d'Avril*. We threw our burdens aside, and ourselves on top of them. We watched our transport as it lumbered dustily past us to the spot assigned us—limbers full of ammunition, machine guns, tripods, material of every sort and kind, following them came

our best friend, the field kitchen, stovepipe emitting a most promising blue smoke that told of coming "chow." Before long the mess-line formed, and the hungry boys were busy once more taking care of the inner man. We lolled around there on the edge of the wood until about three-thirty, while the officers scouted around in search of our headquarters, which was nothing to them but a spot on the map labeled L15C7090. At last they called us into ranks again, and marched us off to our headquarters, which we finally reached by a rather circuitous route, of roads, trails and finally a woodland path, and this led down a sheer hillside to a valley below. And there we found the place that had been assigned to us—a large farmhouse with still larger barns beside it.

With much unction we were introduced to our quarters—a luxurious spot it was, too—the hay-loft of a large barn, three feet deep in clean, luxurious straw. Of course, there were mice, but they were incidental. However, no such luck as a night's sleep was to be our portion. In came Sergt. "Mac." "Third Squad Second Platoon—outside." Out went Corporal "Pete" with his "Snappy Third." "Report to Lieut. Harris at once" was our order. Lieut. Harris mounted his horse and led us right back up the hill to the main road, where we found our field kitchen with the brake out of commission. Our job was to act as a living brake and keep the old rig from crashing headlong down the hill and spilling the company's dinner all over the map. Our efforts succeeded, thanks to the happy thought of "Hig" Higgins, who tied a rope around one wheel and made a "drag" of it. So thanks to the Third Squad, the company dined. But did we rest then? Not we! "All-l-l gun teams out to the limbers to claim their guns!" So out we trotted, and after some large digging around, we finally got all our paraphernalia in one spot. Off we started then, up the steep side of the hill beyond which the Germans were supposed to be. By this time it was quite dark, and the wood was very thick—intertwined, too, with countless paths that seemed to lead nowhere. Finally, however, we made our way through to the edge of the wood, where we found a road outlining the

brow of the hill. Here on the fringe of the wood, eight gun positions had been selected by the officers, and there we mounted our guns. My gun was No. 2, and back in the woods a few yards behind it, we pitched our little "pup-tent." Our outfit looked something like this:



Here you can see our gun, pointing over the hill, with one of my trusty men on watch behind it. Over the brow of the hill, twenty-six hundred yards away, is the cross-roads at (we'll call it *Bon Air*), where the Germans must pass to bring up supplies to their first line. The task allotted to our eight guns was to be ready at a signal to pour twelve thousand rounds of shot into the immediate vicinity of that cross-roads—"harrassing fire," they call it. To carry out this plan, all the guns were trained on the proper spot, by means of instruments in the hands of officers, and a guard was placed at each gun to watch for the "S. O. S." (signal to fire)—a rocket of three stars, red over green over yellow. The remainder of the gun teams slept the sleep of the just—that is, after they had pitched their tents, packed the legs of the gun tripod, unrolled their packs, and done sundry other little camp chores.

All was quiet until three-fourteen. It was timed to the instant—Conboy was my guard at the time the signal went up, and he had my trusty wrist-watch on his arm. "S. O. S.—all out!" he called, meanwhile firing with all his might—400 shots a minute for the first two minutes, and 250 shots a minute for the next three minutes, all according to instructions. The only trouble was, the guns (also according to instructions) were silent, because they weren't loaded! However, we all scrambled out of our blankets, and out to the gun. The "S. O. S." rockets were still illuminating the sky when we got to our posts—and soon the officers were around to see what we had done.

By this time it was nearly three-thirty, and you know, the hour from three-thirty to four-thirty is "stand-to," the hour when most attacks start, and the time at which all soldiers are expected to be armed, awake and at their posts. When "stand-to" was over, it was my turn to go on watch, so once more "Pete" didn't get any sleep. Then he had to trot down the hill with half his squad to get their breakfast—then back again to relieve the remaining half. About eleven o'clock the order came from headquarters, "Strike tents, roll packs and take cover!" We promptly struck, rolled and took—also *camouflaged* the gun with branches, carried all the spare parts and boxes back to the bushes, hid our packs and selves. And so effective was our concealment that when the Third Platoon came up to relieve us, they almost stepped on me!

At last we were relieved from gun duty—but no sooner had we clambered down and had our noon mess than the call came "Signal-men and non-commissioned officers front and center!" Off trips "Pete" once more, this time to listen to a lecture on map-reading. That was no sooner over, than "Gib" Elliot, Francis and I started off up the hillside with "Gib's" range-finder—a marvelous instrument, having packed within its small dimensions more dollars-and-cents value than a five-passenger flivver, and from there we were dragged up once more to the hill, to relieve the Third Platoon while they dined. We followed them to the mess-line as quickly as we could, and then retired, as we thought, to bed. But the air was thick with rumors of more manoeuvres, and the poor old "top-kick" was being plastered with questions he couldn't answer. Finally the "dope" leaked out, and we were advised that the gun team would go up to the hillside posts, all except three of them, and retreat with the guns, bringing them back to camp. Our team was one of those assigned to the last three guns, which were not to be dismounted until twelve o'clock—so we decided that *at last* we'd be able to taste the delights of that marvelous straw bed. But oh, what a taste it was! Every second minute there would be a howl: "Cor-poral Bee-hn! Corporal Beehn" or "All Signallers out-side!" followed by a scuffling in the straw and many muffled

imprecations as some sleeping hero received the impact of a hob-nailed boot on a sensitive ear or ankle. Then some out-o'-luck private would come lumbering through the pitchy darkness looking for a missing pack or rifle. The room was in a constant hubbub, so that none but the hardiest and most carefree could sleep. Then at last came my call—"Cor-poral Camp-bell!" Yes, I was there—what did they want? I wasn't due to go up and bring down our gun for a full half hour. "Change of orders—your squad is to go up with belts and rifles to act as a picket line, protecting the retreat of those three guns against the advancing Germans." Well, that wasn't so bad—no heavy guns to carry down the hill—but at that, picket duty on a lonely hillside didn't offer endless opportunities for a joyseeker. Lieut. Harris took us up through the woods, and then called me aside, drew out a mysterious map, and by means of a flashlight showed me our post. "Take your men and post them around the three sides of this wood," he said. "You are protecting the retreat of these three guns. The Germans are advancing up the far side of that hill." And away went the lieutenant, leaving me to post my men around that dark, forbidding wood. From our posts we could see the flash of the artillery fifteen miles or so away, on the *real* front. That lent realism to our little job—but that wasn't all. Along came a Hun plane—we could hear the hum of his motor plainly—and then a young bedlam broke loose. The searchlights flashed in the sky, the anti-aircraft guns started booming—the shells whistled over our heads and burst over the wood behind us. All of a sudden the sky was brilliant with star-shells, the largest searchlight beam dropped very low, a deafening roar of shots resounded, and a flaming mass dropped down over the hill, out of sight. They got him! A little later another battery of guns, evidently after a more distant fleet of planes, started flashing shrapnel shells, that burst in the sky in front of us, for all the world like a carnal flock of itinerant stars, each opening a sleepy eye for an instant, and then retiring into the blackness again. After a while, Lieut. Harris came to visit our posts, and was duly and properly challenged by all my sentries—for which "Uncle



Pete" got a word of commendation. I was instructed to collect my men at one A. M., and bring them back to camp, through that delicious forest—far from trackless, but buried in a superfluity of trails that all looked alike. Luckily, however, we didn't get lost, and arrived in camp on schedule—only to find that all our pals were ready, with packs rolled, to start off on the homeward march, at 2. A. M.! Oh, Morpheus, what we did to you in those three days! One hour and twenty minutes' total slumber! The idea was that according to the plan, the bridge over which we had crossed was to have been blown up by German planes at one that morning. Of course, that was simply for the purpose of making our officers find another way home—which they did. We tramped through *Avril* by the light of an almost-full moon, that cast deep blue shadows down the side-streets and bathed the façades in silent blue brilliance. There was an uncanny something about that night that I'll remember a long time. Suddenly the boys started whistling "Fair Harvard"—and the mystery vanished, leaving us once more a bunch of weary American boys, trying to make the best of a bad bargain.

We hit camp at about five A. M., and threw ourselves into our blankets and onto the floor. We slept like dead men—were roused at noon for dinner, and again at six for supper. Then we began to feel almost ourselves again, and by seven, Ford, "Gib" Elliot and I had "pep" enough to go down to the village for eggs, chips and the little frills that go with it—potato, bread, milk and jolly French persiflage. Then back to bed, and to my great surprise, to a full eight hours more of sleep. Knowing my slumberless propensities, you can imagine how weary I was.

*Wednesday, May 29th*

This morning we spent in a very ordinary machine gun drill, about which there's nothing much to say. But the afternoon was an event. I had my first ten shots with a rifle—and out of the ten, I hit the target six times! Of course, the Second Platoon won out in the firing—but why mention that?—that's to be expected! In the evening, several of us went down to the village and indulged in a

delicious pudding, which we had wisely ordered the evening before. Then, as Sammy says, "Home and to bed!" *Thursday, May 30th (Decoration Day)*

This is a holiday—but oh! oh! oh! and again, whew! When the Commanding General of all the American Armies comes to visit a camp, there's not much holiday for the inmates. Policing every corner of the camp, scrubbing leggins, shining shoes, cleaning out quarters, lining up personal equipment neatly on the floor—making everything look like a new pin. I tried to write this screed today, and I've succeeded. But here are the places where I've camped—first, on my spare parts box at my own bunk, until the room had to be cleaned out—then over in the canteen, until a British sergeant very politely requested me to vamoose, so that they could clean it. From there I trotted off to the barracks again, and sat on the boardwalk, with my letter on my knee. (On reading this over, I find I neglected to mention that we didn't see the general!) Then, after mess, Conboy, Clark Kenyon and I started off in search of delicacies for the palate. We found a place where there were eggs to be had—and chocolate, bread, chips, *paté*, coffee, milk and other things. We had to wait in the little outer store while *Madame* prepared the viands—and there, on *Madame's* butter-and-cheese counter, part of this screed was done. Then inside, in *Madame's* little dining room, we ate—and in the odd intervals, "Pete" scrivined a bit more. After dinner, we wandered off in search of a shady, grassy spot in a meadow—and found it, too. And so here I am, stretched prone on the grass, finishing the story of a perfect week. And as the Mother Goose tale has it, "Now my story's done." Lots of love to you all—and keep on writing letters! They're priceless.

*Friday, May 31st*

Today was muster day—that second-best of all army celebrations. (The best, of course, is pay-day—though this time it's going to be of interest to me chiefly as a Day of Settlement, when I'll clean up my debts and start clear.) Don't get the idea that borrowing in the army is like borrowing in civilian life. Money, out here, is a sort of community possession, and if one man is "broke,"



there's hardly a man in the company who won't lend him what he needs—and there's *always* somebody broke. Some pitch pennies till suddenly they find they've run out of pennies and francs, too; others patronize the *vin blanc* a bit too generously on some one big evening; others plunge in chocolate, and pass it around lavishly till chocolate and money run out simultaneously. I went broke shortly after my "squad party." But nobody cares; all we do is to make sure, before we go on a foraging expedition, that *somebody* in the bunch has got enough to pay the bill. So much for a Utopian democracy in which every man earns his dollar a day! In many ways it can offer advantages of which the social system of our civil life can't boast.

*Saturday, June 1st*

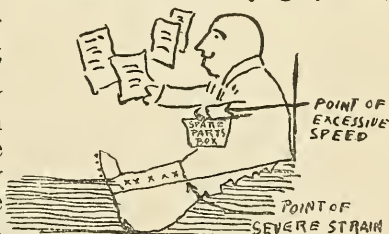
Here's another Saturday that finds us working most of the afternoon. As one of the boys said in the hut, "I wish they'd call this doggoned war off. It's something terrible the way it cuts into my afternoons."

We're getting certain parts of our instruction now from a British corporal who is certainly a sketch. The "bloom-in' blighta" is blessed with a Cockney accent, and a bit of vitriolic humor which he delights in letting loose on the boys when they're not "up to snuff" on the drilling. He'll notice a point in the drill at which Number Four men in each squad have failed to run up to perform a certain duty. "Ah-h-h! Look at 'em! Ahn't they greyceful, standing there, now.

They want a special inviteyeton, I suppose!"

Some of his stuff is very amusing, and although the fellows call him the "wild boar," they know that his bark is a whole lot worse than his bite.

When we knocked off about four, I went to the hut, and rigged up a very comfortable "writing-room." There's a bank and a gutter around our shack, and here's a cross-section of how I fixed myself. I got quite a lot of back-letters cleaned up, but oh, how stiff my legs were when I quit!



*Saturday, June 1st—(Letter to P&L)*

You can't imagine how good it is to see the old P&L earmarks on the mail as it comes in every few days. The platoon sergeant comes to the door of our hut and calls "Mail!" Of course, there's a rush—but nobody except me can be certain that there's mail coming to him before his name is called. I can see the *Peanelogram* envelopes sticking out way down at the bottom of the pack—and long white envelopes, too. Thanks to you and Mr. Juenker, the P&L mailing list, mother and (s-sh! keep it dark!) one or perhaps two faithful damsels, I do pretty well as regards mail. I got twenty-six letters in one mail!

By the way,—as regards what I am interested in at the office—I'm interested in everything, and that's a fact. I'd like to see the fall magazine list, and know about the copy plans and all that. So, when you write, don't leave out things like that just because I'm a corporal instead of an ad-man! I'd like to keep so in touch with things that I could come right in and get in line again at the old desk at twenty-four hours' notice.

We're working like the Old Harry these days, and thanks to the exigencies of the case, we're putting in some time on holidays like Sunday and Saturday afternoon. But the work is very interesting and varied, and the fellows keep pretty cheerful. The funniest part of it all is that nobody knows what the next moment is going to bring forth—whether in half an hour we'll be out in the parade ground studying the mechanism of the gun, packing mules and limbers, learning the fine points of sighting and aiming, or whether we'll be off on a hike with full packs, rifles, helmets, gas-masks and machine guns, on our way to rifle range, machine gun range, practice trenches or "gas-house." The result of this uncertainty is that one of the pet camp remarks is "What's the next formation?" and the million-and-one repetitions of the same question make the top sergeant's life miserable.

One thing the soldier learns to do *par excellence* is to stand in line, and that doesn't mean merely in ranks, either! We stand in line for breakfast, dinner and supper. After each meal we stand in line to wash our mess-kits.

We stand in line for "issue"—that is, when guns, ammunition or other material is being given out—for mail, for payroll and later on for pay—and soldier etiquette keeps that fair and square, too—the one sure way to create a hubbub is to pretend that you're going to break in. It sounds more like a bunch of angry bears than a crowd of budding heroes! Oh, and I forgot to mention the canteens! You always have to stand in line to buy anything there—and invariably, when you want chocolate, the fellow in front of you buys the last cake, and you're "out o' luck."

We had a very interesting time this week; beginning on Sunday we indulged in "manoeuvres"—war-game stuff. Between that time and Tuesday morning at six A. M., I got just one and one-half hour's sleep! But I learned more than I've ever learned in any other forty-eight hours. My squad mounted its gun (I have the honor to be a gun commander now, you know!) up in line with seven others, prepared to drop a *barrage* on a cross-roads where some imaginary Germans were supposed to be bringing up supplies. That meant that we had to pitch our little "pup-tents" up there in the woods behind our gun, and have a man on guard all the time waiting for the rocket that was the "S. O. S." signal. The rocket went up at 3:14 A. M.—and after that came "stand-to"—that's the danger-hour, you know, when every soldier in the trenches must be awake and at his post. Then there were lectures in range-finding, map-reading and the various other phases of warfare that the manoeuvre was bringing up. Then just when we expected peace and sleep, our squad was appointed as a picket line to cover the "retreat" of our machine guns, against the "advancing Germans." There weren't any Germans in the ground up there in that lonely spot—but believe me, there were plenty of pyrotechnics in the sky. One venturous *Boche* "got his" while we were up there, and almost over our heads, too. A raid, by the way, is a very familiar thing to us in camp now—we have 'em in the neighborhood almost any clear night—but they're none the less interesting. You'll hear the buzz of the planes overhead in the pitchy dark. Then suddenly,

you'll see a searchlight shoot across the sky—then from another point, a second goes up. Soon the sky is interlined with them. Then you'll see them criss-cross each other as they try to get a bead on "Jerry." Then you'll see a lot of star-shells go up—then the anti-aircraft guns begin booming—and if you're near enough, they whistle to beat the band as they go overhead. Then—if the Allies are having a lucky night—you'll see a flash of fire shooting down toward the ground, and shortly after, the lights are out, the firing stopped, and all is quiet. The incident is closed, and one more "Jerry" is done for. That was what happened the other night up there—and besides, the continuous flashes on the horizon of the guns at the front, twenty miles or so away, all lent realism to a none-too-pleasant job. Then at one A. M., we had to scout down through the woods to camp, only to find that the rest of the company was all ready to start on the hike for home. We soon joined them, and then four hours later we were in our camp again—what was left of us! We threw ourselves down on the hard board floors, and slept—slept till lunch-time, crawled over to the mess-hall and ate, crawled back and slept again till supper-time. Then, to my great surprise, we all slept like dogs that night, too! I don't remember ever in my life having slept eighteen hours out of twenty-four—but then, I don't remember ever going forty-eight hours with less than two hours' slumber, either!

As you may guess from the looks of this scrawl, it's getting so pitch-dark I simply can't see, so I'll have to quit. But before I do, I'm going to urge you once again to write as often as you can, because over here, every letter is worth its weight in gold. And give my regards to everybody!

*Sunday, June 2nd*

A well-directed "diary-letter" for today would read something like this: "Rose early and went to the village to church. Then wandered out into the country with a book and a pal and snoozed the rest of the day." But this isn't a short-story, it's a truth and hence a long-story; it's a fact, so I have to switch off at "rose early" and admit that

instead of going to church, we went out to the rifle range! Yes, and spent a very interesting morning there, too, shooting at five hundred yards. I hit the target, which was more than I expected to do—but I don't think they'll have to buy a new target because of any damage *I* did to it with my ten shots! One bunch of us started back for the barracks before the rest were finished—an unusual procedure, a sort of concession because it was Sunday. Our good old top sergeant marched us home, and under his leadership, before we'd gone very far, we had the whole column whistling march tunes—a regular fife and drum corps without the drums, and all in time with the marching step, too—a thing that it's almost impossible to do when the whole company is marching together. You can't imagine what a tonic that whistling and singing on the march is to the men; they seem to be a different bunch!

At any rate, we did get the other half of our day of rest—and instead of resting, a bunch of us started off down the road to one of the larger towns nearby. A lorry picked us up and gave us a bully lift; so we got there in ample time to grab a nice beefsteak, three fried eggs, many chips, bread and butter and coffee. We passed one block of buildings that had been bombed recently. There it was, a great big gaping hole where two houses had been, with the debris piled upon itself in the cellar, and torn and splintered beams—great logs of walnut and oak, many of them—torn from their centuries-old position, and left sticking ludicrously out of the ruins, looking almost like gnarled and twisted fingers reaching skyward to grasp their assailant. This effect was so realistic in one case that it startled me.

But there, in the midst of all that destruction, the indomitable spirit of France showed itself. Here was a square of homes and shops without a window intact, with debris in the streets and perhaps victims in the hospital. The wound in the heart of the town was fresh. Yet on the roughly planked-up doors there were little signs "*Jean Saniez et son épicerie reviendront ici demain.*" "*Mme. Breton est allée à B — Elle revient ce soir.*" *La boucherie est*



*toute prête à continuer.*" "Business as usual!"—and a sniff for the Hun and his rain of bombs! But in another doorway I saw Old France!—the France that is passing, I think. There, just inside the doorstep of one house, sat an aged couple, both sitting quite straight in stiff wooden chairs. The woman was wrinkled like a brown, dried-up apple, and bent so that the chair-back served her not at all. She was staring out the door, at nothing, apparently, but who knows? Perhaps she saw a distant camp or battlefield—perhaps she merely saw the past.

The old man wore baggy brown corduroys, rakish puttees—doubtless the gift of a kindly *poilu*; and from under his old French soldier's cap his long white hair fell over his shoulders. In his hand was an ancient fiddle, and the expression on his face—it was more an emotion than a mere expression—seemed to say, "Old friend, you'll never sing again." But it was only a glimpse as we passed the door, and a sunbeam slipped in and showed it to me. Maybe they'll smile again—France does things like that.

On the way home, we had two fine lifts—one a speedy Royal Flying Corps bus, with nice leather seats, and a dozen black devils in its motor, each one saying, "Faster! Faster!" Then, when they dropped us, we were picked up by a huge contrivance that must have had an aeroplane or something concealed inside it. At any rate, it brought us home in jig-time. And then came good old Morpheus, who is getting to be as good a friend of mine on the hard floor as he used to be when I disported myself on springs.

### *Monday, June 3rd*

Bobby Hillyer's birthday, Mr. Davis' birthday, and—is it Brother Bill's, too? But to us it was the greatest day of all—pay-day! The line formed, I took my pay—96 francs—from Lieut. Sam. Hall, Mr. McNulty's friend, and then, in common with most of the rest of the company, I ran madly around looking for the creditors on my little list. Several forgotten little sous came into my coffers, too—which helped things considerably! As is usual with pay-day, it was so much the event *du jour* that I don't think I'll insult it by chronicling any other happenings.

*Tuesday, June 4th*

At noon today we knocked off, because the word came that we were to move. At three-thirty the order changed, and took the company out for a hike with packs—but your 'umble servant continued to snooze for another hour, and then shined and brushed up a bit to go on once more as Corporal of the Guard. This time, however, the job was as quiet as the grave, and therefore a minus quantity as regards news material. You know what Poor Richard said—"Happy that nation, fortunate that age, whose history is not diverting!"

*Wednesday, June 5th*

This morning I've been sitting here in the sun outside the guardhouse writing trash to you.

This afternoon I was roused from my more or less well-earned slumber in the guardhouse; they wanted my rifle, to turn it in. The rifle was replaced by a borrowed pistol, which I hung on my belt and wore for the rest of the day. I felt like Captain Kidd!

When we got off guard at five o'clock the water in the bathhouse was on. That was good—but when a good, kind friend whispered in my ear, "There is going to be warm water at seven-thirty," that made it better yet. Incidentally, that's the only way to grab off your share of semi-luxuries in the well-known army—freeze onto a friendly tip, and keep mum. Ten minutes after we had our bath, there was a mob clamoring to get in—and nothing but frigid water for 'em!

Rumors of our departure have been hanging around for days—and of course, the turning in of the rifles multiplied them tenfold. Here they are, thus far! We're going to stay here; we're going to a point about eighteen miles from here; we're going to hike for two days, three days or four days, and then take a train; we're going to an American base, a hundred to a hundred and eighty miles away; and there are others that are too wild to be at all credible. You can imagine, though, what happened to the rumors when the order came, at about dark, to come and get our rifles and ammunition again!



*Thursday, June 6th*

Oh, boy, what a day! It started at reveille—"We're leaving this camp today," sez the captain. "Turn in your rifles after this formation—also your ammunition," sez the top sarge. And we turned 'em in—this time, we hope, for good, as rumor says we're going to get better ones. Then came the order, "Roll packs, overcoat rolls and blanket rolls." Then "All squads out to pack limbers—bring all equipment, machine guns, etc." Out we swarmed onto the parade ground with all our possessions—such a polyglot array of stuff you never saw! And then, when our work was about half completed, came the clarion call from headquarters—"Stop packing limbers"—then, a little later, "Turn in all machine guns and equipment!" That little thing we immediately did, though it meant carting about twelve wagonloads of stuff half way across camp.

This conflict of orders seems hard to understand until one realizes that in a divisional movement like this, a company of a hundred and seventy men is hardly a flea-bite in a division of thirty thousand, and that the problem is to move the division, not to pamper a company with absolute precision and sequence of orders.

Well, then we had to draw "iron rations"—then eat noon mess—then clean up the camp, sling packs, and be ready to move off. Our dee-licious pack, overcoat roll and extra shoes we carried; our "blanket roll," containing our extra blanket, personal belongings and bed-sack, went on the wagons.

At about quarter past one, we got the order to march—and we marched until after eleven that evening, with no rest except supper-hour and the customary ten minutes by the roadside at the end of each marching hour. We passed through village after village, each with its quaint little church, *mairie*, *école* and handful of white, red-tiled or thatched cottages. We did all the things that soldiers do on hikes—swore at the sun, the army, the Germans and the packs; sat in thistles, nettles and nice sharp stones; ate white chalk dust, brown ordinary dust and petrol-laden automobile dust; got thirsty and swore at the absent

water-cart; swore at the chlorinated apology for a drink that we eventually got, but drank it just the same; sang a little, whistled a little, and then simmered down into that state of silent apathy in which a company keeps perfect step and eats up miles as regularly as clockwork. Some, of course, wavered a bit, and a few of the less hardy allowed their packs to be loaded on the limbers. But the old Third Squad was intact at the end of the day's march. It's a most peculiar sensation to be on the move without the slightest idea of your destination or your direction, when even the major of your battalion only gets his orders a couple of hours ahead, and often has them countermanded or changed at a few minutes' notice. Even the compass helps but little as in the hilly section we're going through today, you tramp all around Robin Hood's barn to get anywhere.

The order "Company—halt!" comes at ten minutes before the clock hour. Then "Fall out on the right side of the road—remove packs!" follows, and you're there for ten minutes. It's a funny thing that it's impossible to make good fall-out spots and minute-hands coincidental. At two minutes of fall-out time, you'll be passing through a beautiful wood, with grassy banks on each side of the road, and a cool breeze blowing. Two minutes later the order will come to fall out, and you'll awake from your lethargy to find the wood somewhere in your past history, and your present stopping-place a sun-baked open spot along the roadside, with the sun hammering the right bank and leaving the forbidden left bank shady. Then a string of ten or fifteen British Army lorries will come lumbering by, and add to your joys by presenting you with a neat talcum-powder bath of chalk dust. Then, in ten minutes, you're on your way once more, gargling the dust out of your mouth with one precious gulp of water.

At about ten o'clock the word came that we had only a half mile more to go. Well—all I need to say is that we arrived at our destination an hour and a half later, and that "only a half-mile more" has been added to the company's collection of humorous by-words.

Finally, we got to our camp—a field just outside of F——, where there were a few members of a British labor company

already quartered. It was certainly great to see those tired boys go to it, unroll their packs and pitch tents in the inky darkness. I pitched with Hammond, who is an old sailor. The result was that our tent was up among the first, and we hit the hay before twelve—but not before I had heard a disquieting rumor.

*Friday, June 7th*

For once in her life, Dame Rumor told the truth! That everlastingly condemned bugle blew at four-thirty! O-ooch! Then came mess at five, in the cold, clammy, dewy morning—then the rolling of packs—and then, at six o'clock to the dot, the assembling in company front, packs slung, gas-masks and other paraphernalia around our necks—then "Right by squads!" and once more we were off. (By the way, speaking of duds, I've one more possession now—a pair of very good field glasses—oh, and a whistle, too—I'd almost forgotten that. We corporals are getting quite flossy!). We marched out of F—— with the rumor floating about that we had only eleven miles to go. That was at six in the morning. At four in the afternoon we arrived at C——. You can figure out for yourself the length of each one of those miles! We passed through countless little towns and villages, saw a quaint old blacksmith shop, and an —— water-wheel that was a scenic gem. The boys, however, were too weary to take much stock in scenery!

At about noon, the word was given to fall out—and for once we had a real spot—right on the edge of C——, the town in which we were to be billeted for the night. At the side of the road (and this time we were allowed to fall out on the forbidden left) was a little spring-fed stream, cold and clear as crystal—just a tiny affair, a foot or two wide. Well, the boys almost literally "fell out," they were so completely fagged—and then "fell in," and bathed tired, swollen, blistered feet in that heaven-sent stream. It was agony at first, but only for an instant—and so effective a stimulant was it, that one by one the boys began to disappear, to turn up again in little *estaminets* and *épiceries* all over the village. "Con" and "Ken" and I scouted around, found a very little to eat, and also some excellent *Bordeaux rouge*—something hardly obtainable in the neighborhood

we just left. After an hour or so, we returned to the roadside, and from there marched up the road a bit further, to where the trusty old field kitchen was located. There our international culinary department (Melidones the Greek, Schnackenburg, Neuendorff and Karoly) handed us the noonday chow. The next couple of hours we killed around the little town, in search of eggs, a few of which we found—then the company fell in once more, loaded the old packs on our humps once again, and started off for our billets—up a hill as steep as the old cellar door, and nearly a mile long. At last we got there, and found our quarters. Our platoon was billeted in a roomy barn which belonged to quite a pretentious farmhouse. The floor was covered with straw, and there were little holes in the wall here and there, through one of which a calf in the next shed peeked in at me. We grabbed a good spot in a corner for our squad, and proceeded to settle. Then “Con” and “Ken” and I started off scouting again, got a few more eggs and then hiked back to the barn. The search for the hen-fruit was a study in itself. We visited probably half a dozen houses, but everyone was out “*dans les champs*”—where the women work until eight o’clock! Finally, though, we got an old mother to boil our booty for us—and meanwhile, in French, “Randy” conducted a running fire of conversation—about the war, about conditions in France—and about the American soldiers. We are the first U. S. boys that have come this way, and the people seem very cordial, though I don’t think they quite know what to make of us, at that!

When we got back to the barn, we added “Jud” Clark to our little party—Jud’s feet were bothering him so he hadn’t moved. After we’d had our feast, we heard that the field kitchen was going to bring our dinner up the hill to us. It was a case of the mountain coming to Mahomet, because in their condition, the boys would have gone hungry rather than trudge down and up that hill again. It was good mess, too—well worthy to be praised—as it was! (Betwixt the writing of that word “was” and the placing of that exclamation point many things have happened. I’ll chronicle them all in turn, though.)

When our feast was over, we literally "hit the hay"—and about that, too, there is a story. One of the sergeants beckoned to me "You talk French," he said. "Let's you and I go over here and see if we can't rent a real bed for tonight." I agreed, and, crossing the barnyard, we knocked at the door; no one was at home, because, as I found out later, "*En France, maintenant tout le monde travaille.*" We peeped in at one window, and what we saw made our mouths water. A huge fat bed—an opulent sort of bed, with counterpane, deep pillows and inches upon inches of the finest mattress. The room itself was spotless. But *madame* was not at home, so we questioned one of the workmen about the place. *Oh, sans doute—madame* would rent us the room on her return. And just then it came to me—"Pete', old boy, you're campaigning now—and you're not playing the game!" So off I trotted back to the barn, where "Con" had made up our "bed." And in that bed we slept the sleep of the just—also of the very, very tired—until reveille.

### *Saturday, June 8th*

"Con," "Ken" and I decided that we wanted some real breakfast—and we found it, and with it a little of the heart of France. Our threesome was in search of eggs, chips and perhaps something else. "*Fini—Fini*" was the answer we got at all the larger houses—regretful, but decided. At last we came to a little cottage—poverty itself. An old, old woman was the only human thing near by. She started with the usual "*Fini*," but suddenly, "*Vous êtes trois!*" she said, and her attitude changed entirely. She went out, searched the barn and found eggs; got potatoes; gave us each a big slice of her priceless bread, and butter, too. More—a cup of delicious *café au lait*. And then she showed us the reason for her hospitality. "*Ce sont mes trois fils*," she said, and showed us three photos, each in an elaborate French gingerbread frame. One a sergeant; one a private; one a prisoner in Germany, and all three the perfection of intelligent manhood. Then she showed us their letters; and finally, when we inquired the price of her bounty, she reluctantly said "Two francs two pence"



—she didn't want to charge us anything! We finally pressed five francs on her, and went our way.

Soon we were once more on the march—and after a fatiguing day's hike, arrived at the most perfect camping-spot I have ever seen. At a little before four in the afternoon, we turned off the main road, and down a long hill, and there we came on a veritable little paradise—and not so little, either, as it sheltered nearly a thousand men that night. It was a perfectly level plain, perhaps eight acres in extent, and shaded by huge poplars, which after the French fashion, had been set out in even rows by some nice old farmer. The grass was quite close-cropped, and studded with buttercups and other flowers. At one end of the plain was a spring of delicious water, pure as crystal, at the other was a creek, perhaps thirty feet wide, deep enough for diving, and yet so clear that the bottom was plainly visible. Just beyond the camp the stream turned a quaint old water-wheel which drove our two artists, Schmitt and Clubley, quite insane. There we spent our evening—and the night—one of perfect slumber. There, too, the first installment of this screed was written. Incidentally—I almost forgot to mention it—I had my first swim since I've been soldiering. And did I enjoy it? Whee!

### *Sunday, June 9th*

Our morning was a lazy one, in that glorious spot, with little except foot inspection to interrupt my diary and my snoozing—until, at 3:32, a cyclone struck the camp, in the shape of an order from headquarters—"Strike tents and roll packs immediately!" The captain was away—the major was away—and half the fellows were off in the neighboring towns with permission to stay till 5:30. If you'll turn back a few pages in this screed, you'll find a parenthetical interruption. That was the minute when I jumped up out of my comfy tent and started to move. Forty minutes later the column was on the march! That meant sending scouts to seek and bring back the absent, striking camp, policing the whole area, packing the transport, harnessing the horses and all that. Can an army jump? You bet!

We hiked off about four miles, and pitched tents again in a field near a railroad. Then we had field-kitchen mess, and turned in.

*Monday, June 10th*

"Con" and I (we pitch tents together regularly now) struck our tents and rolled our packs among the first, so that we had time to be a bit leisurely about mess. After breakfast we marched a couple of miles further, to a siding where our train was drawn up—a train composed of box cars for the men and horses, and flat cars for the wagons. Ours was a *de luxe* car—we had our top sergeant, a platoon sergeant, two other sergeants and the whole Third Squad, including your "Corp. Pete," among our nineteen men. When I tell you that we were on that car for nearly — — days, and that in that — — days we ate and slept there, you'll begin to realize that your little son is getting *some* hardened! As a matter of fact, for a journey of that sort, a box car is far preferable to a day coach, because at least one can stretch out to sleep, and walk about a bit.

Between us, and with the help of a newspaper item, we cooked up the idea of having a stove in the car. It was no sooner conceived than executed, and with the aid of three petrol tins, some wire and an odd sheet of tin, we soon had a grand stove working. We had hot mess, and warmth to take the chill off a raw, foggy day. You can't imagine the picturesque scene we made—sprawled at all angles over the floor, with packs strewn about and mess-kits clutched lovingly in (it must be confessed!) grimy hands. It's a point in constant debate whether a soldier's best friend is his gas-mask or his mess-kit. Just now, the odds favor the mess-kit—but then, we've never been in a gas-attack! Of course, there were songs—but the prize joke of the day was pulled when, just at the smoky stage of our fire, we went into a long, black tunnel. When we emerged, there in the middle of the floor was "Old Sol" Schnitz, fully arrayed in his gas-mask. Preparedness is his motto, all right! When I tell you that we traveled just about as far from our former location as it's possible to go and still remain in France, you'll be able, I think, to get some idea of where we are. Incidentally, when my grandchildren read out of their



French grammars, "*Avez-vous vu la Tour Eiffel?*" I'll be able to answer in the affirmative—though it was from quite a distance and through a heavy fog.

When we came through a large and very beautiful city near there, the train stopped, and we were fed coffee—fed from the hands of very beautiful *demoiselles*—I think they must have been of the stage, they were so uniformly attractive.

I'm finding it impossible to separate our train-ride into days. We slept when we felt like it, and stayed awake when the spirit moved us. So I'm just going to give you incidents of the voyage as they come to me.

*Thursday, June 13th*

We passed, on our trip, through one of the large cities that has long been a German objective, and which has been bombarded many times. It is, of course, only here and there that the firing has had effect, but every little distance there appears a great, gaping hole that marks the successful end of one shell's earthward trip. Then windows for yards around are shattered, and tiled roofs marked with shell-fire. The streets, of course, are an indication that many people have left the town, but those who are there seem smiling and happy, and have none of the hunted look that you would expect of civilians in a bombarded city. Of course, in almost every town you see signboards directing you to the nearest "*abri*"—the dugouts that are used by the cautious in case of air-raids.

As we got further along on our way, and hence further from the front, things grew brighter, and we got at least a glimpse of what France must be like in peace-time. The thing that impressed me most was the great open spaces—the general aspect of the country seems more that of our Middle West than that of an old, crowded continental nation. Another peculiar thing is the perfect way in which people in different sections agree about architecture. One section says, "The angle of a roof should be very obtuse. It is written—it is the mode—it shall be done—" and it is!—and a few hundred kilos away some other wise-acre decrees, "Nay—they must all be most acute"—and he, too, is obeyed by the whole countryside! They still,

however, seem to concur in red roofs—which must be most pleasant for *Boche* aerial bombers!

Of course, it turned out that anything as completely attractive as our stove had to be "*Verboten*"—so our good friend was doused, and his cadaver thrown to the four winds, while we garnered a doubtless well-earned reprimand from our C. O. For the rest of the trip we had cold eats.

Toward the end of our journey we stopped at a large town, where, to our unutterable, uncontrollable, hysterical joy, we were fed tomato soup (which was incidental) by completely charming American society girls in chic, crisp, clean Red Cross uniforms. Back in the States, I've had my little say about the senselessness of young girls going trotting off across the seas on just such errands. I take it all back. To have been able to do what that little group of two or three did for that tired, fagged trainload of boys would in itself have justified an ocean voyage. And they're doing it every day! I was very much tickled when, with no further urging than the force of example, every man in our car shaved daily while we were on the train, though it meant juggling with a few drops of canteen water in the bottom of a cup—and then washing in an inch or so more. You can't imagine the effect shaving has on morale. You could almost see the fellows buck up!

When at last we got off the train, we landed in a very prosperous little manufacturing town of three or four thousand—evidently a munitions center, with many new and very beautiful homes, and yet a certain not-quite-finished air that was not at all French, and much more American, it seemed to me. However, the greeting we got was truly French—the most enthusiastic we've had anywhere. All the boys were showered with flowers—I'm enclosing a white rose that a little French girl stuck in my hat. One boy—a youngster of about ten—grabbed my hand and trudged along with me for fully two miles, meanwhile giving me all the gossip. His father was "*tué a la guerre*"—there was a big gas-mask factory in the town—another where they made uniform cloth—he went out to the aviation field every Sunday;—a running fire of

chatter that never even slowed up. I taught him how to say "Stars and Stripes," and then sent him home. That night we camped in an ordinary and quite uninteresting field, "Con" and I acting as partners once more.

Next morning we started on what was to prove the last lap of our journey, for the present, at least. The sun was scorching and although until now I've experienced no foot trouble worth mentioning, that baking road had me almost ready to cry "Nuff!" However, the end of the journey was reached by noon, so we all held out to the finish. When we arrived, we found no "Base" with all that implies—hot showers, Y. M. C. A.'s and the like. Instead, we arrived at what one of the boys, in a letter home, has described perfectly as a "poverty-stricken, God-forsaken, one-horse French village." We have pitched our tents in a field on a hillside overlooking the little place, and feel quite settled now, though it's just twenty-seven hours since we got here. The town is so primitive that the natives wear wooden shoes, live in the house with the cattle, and listen to a town-crier at sundown. There's one feature, though, for which we've blessed the town fathers more than once—the half dozen or so public washing-stones around the town! Ever since we arrived, they've been surrounded by our boys, who are apparently more anxious for clean clothes than they've ever been before. When I tell you that this morning I washed an O. D. shirt, two pair of socks, three "hankies," a suit of underwear and a towel and then went to an ice-cold mill-pond nearby and washed myself, you'll have to admit that it's a clean little son who's writing you. It's time, though, for him to go down and shave, thereby qualifying for the military Beau Brummel Club—after which he and "Con" will go out on their regular nocturnal hunt for palate-tickling delicacies.

What our plans are now, nobody seems to know. We expect to be here for a few days at any rate, and are expecting an issue of clothing and equipment to replace worn-out and damaged articles—also, I hear, wrapped leggins, summer caps, and—glory be!—pistols instead of those confounded rifles!

I'm still awaiting your first letter written after the receipt of one of mine. One should come in the next lot. Lots of love to all.

*Friday, June 14th*

Today has been a lazy day, marked by no special events except (joy uncomparad!) our return to the protecting arm of an American division headquarters and the consequent reappearance in our midst of real American rations—though all we did tonight was look at them—the first meal under the good old-new regime will be tomorrow's breakfast. One of the daughters of the old lady in whose field we are encamped, came up yesterday to ask that, as we were trampling the hay down behind our row of tents, we would assign two American farmers to cut it down. My pal "Con" and another husky ex-farmer volunteered, and I appointed myself manager. They did their work well, though their remarks on the pre-historic scythes she furnished were interesting, to say the least! And no sooner did they report that their labors for the day were ended, than our friends brought out refreshment—precious bread, bacon, fried eggs and *vin rouge*—in which, of course, in my capacity as interpreter and general manager, I participated. There's still a bit more to be cut, and we expect to work still another meal out of it. You'd smile to see the younger of the two sisters sitting on the floor, with a tiny anvil in front of her, hammering out the edge of each precious hand-made scythe—for all the world like the Armorer in Ted's favorite ditty. x (It may interest you to know that this whole installment of nearly two pages, down to the little "x," was written while I had my gas-mask on. No, I'm not in the midst of a gas-attack, but we're getting two or three hours a day of gas instruction now, and as it was raining today, the captain ordered us to wear the bloomin' thing in our tents for twenty minutes. I decided that inasmuch as we've got to learn how to do pretty nearly everything with the jigger on, I might as well start out by scribbling a bit—so there you are!)

*Saturday, June 15th*

Beefsteak for breakfast—beefsteak for dinner—beef stew for supper! So much for day No. 1 of the American

food regime. Oh, boy, how we did go for it! And yet, despite that, "Con" and I went out on our daily ration-rustling party, and gathered in five eggs, three fried and two scrambled, many chips, and other little items of gastronomic interest, including a perfectly gee-lorious smelly cheese—it would be priceless back in the States, but here it was only about three francs. So much for the appetite of the well-known Sammy.

*Sunday, June 16th*

As we had to receive two hours of gas instruction this morning, I didn't go to church, but spent the odd moments of the morning in writing a little, shaving and washing up, down at the washing-stone at the foot of the hill. Then "Con" and I grabbed our mess and hurried back to our tent—for our squad had been given a "detail"—a job to be done before we could call our day's work finished. We had to scare up a hundred and eighty nice round stones, which are to be used for practice in throwing bombs.

Then there was mail—four letters from you, the first I've had in over ten days—a letter from S—— and one from B——, also your *Red Book*, "*Snappy*" and *Times*. Honestly, you can't imagine the plain ornery joy we get out of letters. The fellows seem even more cheerful than usual, and read long extracts to each other. Letters do endless good, believe me.

Then we started off for a neighboring town where rumor had it that things might be bought. Well, I never remember in my life before being completely tickled to death at getting on the wrong road! The town we struck was not M——, as we had expected, but G——, and who in the world should come up and greet me but Warren Case! Two others of the 16th District boys were with him. He's a sort of orderly to the captain now, though his main duties are those of interpreter. His regiment is quartered there for the present; and while his village is not much larger than ours, it has the added merit of possessing a *chateau*—a beautiful big place, too, with a sort of moat around it, and huge trees surrounding it, leaving little but the corner towers visible from a distance. We wandered 'round, had one lone drink apiece of very wretched *vin blanc*, just



for sociability's sake, saw the town and departed, but not before we had dropped in on the butcher-lady and purchased a huge beef-heart and a half dozen eggs. Warren has promised to come over to our town if he has time, so I hope to see him again before we move. He's looking very well, and is freckled to an almost solid brown, and he's filled out quite a lot, too. We got home just in time for evening mess, but we ate only a little of it in our tent. The rest we took down to the home of our friend the Lady of the Scythe. She cooked our heart for us—also a huge portion of French-frieds, and supplied a big bowl of milk apiece. With this we ate some of our precious cheese and our army bread, which she said was "*comme du gateau*," so fine and white it is. Then came salad—real *Café Hugo* lettuce salad with French dressing—and when that had gone its way, she asked, apropos of nothing, if we wouldn't like an egg? Of course! If she'd offered us a side of mutton or a pinch of salt, the answer would have been the same. Out here we eat everything we can find, and spend our idle time and money looking for more.

From here, for policy's sake, we went to the home of another family with which we've made friends—to have our six eggs of the afternoon boiled for the morrow mornin'. By chance, *Monsieur* happened to be there, and he and I struck up a great *camaraderie*. We chattered in French for over an hour about everything under the sun, and before we left, we were given a glass apiece of delicious *vin rouge*, our almost-empty milk-bottle was filled to the brim, and our eggs cooked—all that without the expenditure of a sou! We'll take *Monsieur* some cigarettes tomorrow. He's a good friend to keep.

*Monday, June 17th*

Our first *real* rainy day in a "pup-tent"—and the little thing has stood up mighty well, I think, and vindicated its existence by keeping us dry. The little trenches we dug around it are running merrily with water, and through the open end of the tent, protected only by my raincoat, we can see the rain pelting down—but inside we're dry, and—well, not exactly warm as Coney in August is warm, but at least comfortable. "Con" is asleep beside me, and



I'm under the blanket, with my little black book propped up on a roll of clothes, writing to you. Our day's work is done. It consisted of wearing our gas-masks in our tents for four periods of a half hour each. I nonchalantly read the *Red Book* most of the time!—wrote a little and half-moozed a bit. We're getting quite used to the things. I had a pleasant interruption just now—Corp. Schwartz came splashing along past our tent, and threw in two letters, which really turned out to be three—one from you, and one from S'Edie, with another from Peggy enclosed. They're writing me every Sunday. Believe me, I wish about a dozen good friends would do the same.

Our lunch today was amusing. We didn't relish the idea of standing in line for mess in the pelting rain—so we "took stock" of our larder—found milk, our friend the cheese, some hoarded-up army bread and some dark French bread, two hard-boiled eggs and some hard-tack. A kind friend brought us up hot coffee, and we rewarded him with milk for his own. Then, on the blanket that covers the daisies and forms our floor, we spread our tablecloth—a towel; and set our places at table neatly and I might almost say with meticulous precision. Then we ate—two able-bodied business men, three thousand and a few odd miles from home, in a little foolish tent in a hay-field beside an antediluvian village, in a pelting downpour of rain, having a picnic—and grinning over it! It doesn't seem real—at least not until a drop of undeniable rain-water comes through your almost-perfect roof and splashes on your paper, as one did just now. You'll find the blotlet on one of these sheets.

Now they're coming to inspect our gas-masks—I hear 'em at the next tent—so goodbye for the present. (*Later*) The masks were duly inspected and O. K.'d—then the peace of the camp was shattered by an order to fall in to receive Automatic Colts. At last my mind is relieved! Unless somebody changes his mind again, we *won't* cart any rifles along with us.

I'm finishing this in the warm, comfy kitchen of our friend of last night, where we are drying our raincoats. Madeleine (she's the pretty one) is very proud of her

beautiful new white-pine shoes, in which she's clattering around happily. For myself, I'd like her better in pumps!

*Tuesday, June 18th*

Tomorrow we move to that well-known place "Somewhere Else"—some of us are going to school again, this time to learn the intricacies of one more machine gun, the Hotchkiss. We're going to be instructed by the French, and I'm looking forward to a busy time in my double capacity as squad leader and *interprète*. We went down at last to the transport wagons, to get our blanket rolls, a fact which indicated that when our few days of schooling are over we'll join the company again at some point other than this one.

"Sully" and "Hig," "Con" and I (exactly the ones I had already selected in my mind) were picked to go from my squad. "Con" and I were very busy this evening cleaning out the provisions in our larder, and incidentally, I did a full day's secretarial work repairing the gaps in a huge mass of correspondence. (Which, by the way, I'm only today able to put in the mail!)

*Wednesday, June 19th*

We're off!—and they're off, too—the rest of the boys are going to some new camp on shanks' mare—but we, the chosen fifty-nine, are to be whisked away in good old U. S. A. trucks—packs and all! Whee! (*Later*) Five truck-loads we made—and a jollier crowd you never saw! We sang everything we knew and then started making up ditties. After riding a while, we entered a section of country which, earlier in the war, was in the hands of the Germans—and it gives one a new realization of the war's long, long continuance, to see this country, once torn and bleeding, now once more completely French, with nothing but an occasional knoll or hollow here and there to indicate that once entrenched *poilus* fought for *la patrie* on this soil. Yes, and there are little crosses, too, scattered among the well-tilled fields—crosses each at the head of a little garden spot, which is tended with care, by stranger hands, perhaps, but none the less faithfully because of that. Now and then the trucks would rumble through a

ruined village—the crumbling walls overgrown with weeds and vines, giving them the air of having always been there. Some houses have been repaired, and some brave souls have gone so far as to rebuild in the scene of the old home. There are, of course, in most of the towns, homes which received little or no damage, and in these, too, the people are continuing their daily life very much as usual. This phase of the war was an entirely new one to me—that there are places where the war is already history—where there are children to whom the war is only a half-forgotten nightmare, and where, beside faultless new roads, young trees are standing up bravely to take the place of the old—where the wounds of battle have disappeared, leaving only the scars—crumbling ruins, weed-grown hollows and vivid memories.

It is interesting to realize that much of the damage was done, not by the German artillery, but by the French in retaking the villages. This is the case almost without exception in the village of M—— where we are now located.

We dismounted from the trucks at about noon, and were led to our billets—a great roomy barn, centuries old, and still in excellent condition. The ceiling is the roof, fully thirty feet above our heads—and there, from those huge roughhewn rafters, hang countless dust-laden cobwebs, almost like a canopy. There are *paillasses*, also—little mattresses filled with straw. We'll be comfortable here.

But oh, what a blow! We came without cooks—and our rations have been given to us raw! Stumped? No, Company D is never stumped. A call for cooks—Essie and Conboy volunteer; a call for pots and pans—Francis and I scour the town, with our best French lingo, and obtain the necessary number. Later, we are given the use of an excellent field kitchen that has been built by the French in a half-ruined house, and our cuisine is complete!

This afternoon we made the acquaintance of the Hotchkiss—compared with the Vickers, it's a cannon, but it is so simple, so direct in its action and so evidently powerful that I'm sure we're all going to like it.

Our *program* here is very pleasant—from six to ten in the morning, and from two to five in the afternoon. The

rest of our time is our own, to employ in rest, eating, study and sleep—and in snooping around this curious old town, buying little things in the two or three stores, and in our usual pastime of hunting eggs and chips!

The captain offered to buy enough eggs to supply an egg breakfast for every man in the group—nearly sixty. The job of finding them devolved on yours truly, because of his bit of lingo. I'm getting a mighty interesting insight into the French, the people and their homes, through my little jaunts. They seem to be so glad to find an American with whom they can really talk a bit, that they just open their whole souls.

Event—got chocolate, *good* chocolate!

*Thursday, June 20th*

We took the gun out in the field today, and learned the rudiments of its operation—loading and unloading, mounting and dismounting, and stripping. The more I see of it, the better I like it. It impresses me curiously as being a sort of male gun—the parts are few and large, and there are no queer little kinks and complications, like those in which the Vickers abounds.

After our afternoon session, Sergt. Ford and I trotted about a bit, and then returned to the billets. You'd have laughed to see the little scene that was being enacted there. Our host, a big, burly farmer, was engaged in the popular French pastime of hammering the scythe-blade, his taps were coming forth, with perfect precision, to the raggy time of the "Ragtime Strutter's Ball," whistled by a half dozen or so of our boys! The broad grin on his sun-tanned face showed how he enjoyed it!

About that time something called me—I don't know exactly what. I wanted to play the piano—but where was I to find such a thing? The first one or two natives I questioned hardly knew what a piano was; but the third told me that there was one in the hospice. Now back in America, I hardly think I'd have ventured into a strange nunnery and asked permission to "tickle the ivories;" but, somehow, over here, one does all sorts of curious things, so I went up the spotless steps and knocked on the door. A middle-aged, round, rosy-cheeked sister opened the door

and welcomed me effusively. But certainly I could play, and bring a friend. This evening, then, from seven to eight? Agreed! And I went down the steps again almost walking on air. We went to mess, and were given the best meal that has been our portion since we landed in France—cooked, too, in a makeshift kitchen, by volunteer cooks. Sergt. Ford and I slipped back to our big loft with ours, and there, on a neat little *table à deux*, laid out our supper. Steak, delicious brown gravy with onions, boiled potatoes and tomatoes, rice with raisins and dates to make it more delectable, and good coffee, made better by a liberal application of Sergt. Ford's "private stock" condensed milk. Bread, too, with cheese, and delicious apple jam, almost like honey, and doubly delicious in this almost sugarless country.

Feeling very much at peace with the world, the Sarge and I started off to the hospice. Imagine the "Ossa on Pelion" sensation that came over us when our hostess greeted us, and ushered us into a very beautiful oak-paneled room, with a table in the center, on which, all ready for us, were two huge dishes of fresh strawberries, half-hidden in powdered sugar!! Soon there were *two* hostesses bending over us to see what they could do for us; bread was brought to brighten up the already brilliant feast; and then the little ladies silently slipped away, leaving us alone with the piano. I don't think I ever enjoyed playing any more than I did that hour—there, in a convent far out in battle-scarred France. And the good sister has invited us to return tomorrow evening, and seems almost as anxious to have us as we are to come!

As the Sarge and I rambled home, we looked up the steep, narrow, crooked little street, toward the end, where the heavy blue-blackness of the village church-tower was silhouetted against a brilliant sunset. "Do you realize," I said "that we're in the middle of a war, hardly more than a stone's throw from the front?" "Front," he said absently, "what do you mean—front?"

*Friday, June 21st*

Today decided all bets. The Hotchkiss is *the* machine gun par excellence! After a very early breakfast, we



carried the guns out to the range, and there the new gun proved itself. Power, flexibility and absolute accuracy combine to make the Hotchkiss the best friend we've found yet. And this afternoon we learned more of its capabilities when we took it out in the field for mounting and dismounting drill. We're now all convinced of its superiority, except my artist friend Schmitt who sticks to his old love so firmly that now we call him "Vickers" Schmitt. By the way, the other night I gave him an assignment to sketch one little bit of streetscape that had pleased me. This evening he brought it in—and it's a wonder; it's the scene we feasted our eyes on coming home from the convent the other night—the narrow bit of street and the church tower at the end.

We went to the hospice again this evening, and this time Francis and O'Leary joined us, and by means of our combined memories we raked up lots of things to play on the funny little piano, and hence had a delightfully reminiscent time.

*Saturday, June 22nd*

Off to the range again this morning, where we pursued our studies in firing—then back into our billets to clean the little pets, and after that, freedom until two o'clock. The afternoon periods were more or less a continuation of yesterday's, with a few new points added.

"Con" is so busy these days that it's like pulling teeth to get him out of his smoky old hole of a kitchen. We dragged him out tonight and made him come with us to the one tobacco-shop of which the town boasts. We bought a French paper, some cigars and tobacco, and soon, outside of the door this scene was staged—"Randy" translating the news, with many conclusions jumped at, and many fiendishly bad translations (transliterations); "Con," with a big cigar occupying the left sector of his smile, and a growing crowd of Sammies around us listening to the news. On the way home, someone said: "Have you seen the precipice?" I hadn't, so we wandered in that direction. We entered the churchyard and turned to our left around the church, and there I got one of the surprises of my life. Along the left of the church there is



a path and a wall. At regular intervals along the wall, stand old trees, shading the pathway. On the other side of the wall there is nothing—except space, infinities of it, stretching downward to the white road below, to the winding river beyond it, the quaint yellow-orange and green patches of garden on the farther hillsides, and off on the horizon an endless procession of violet hills that fade almost into the blue of the sky. When I heard the *padre* preach next morning, I knew from whence his inspiration came! As you continue around to the rear of the church, the wall leaves the precipice, and looking over it you see, a few feet below you, the neat little flower-garden which the *padre* probably tends himself. Phlox, forgetmenots, pansies, lilies and others, which to me are nothing but masses of beautiful color, combined to make the place a garden spot in very truth. We went to our billets feeling better for having seen it.

*Sunday, June 23rd*

We got back from a very interesting three hours on the range in time for church. I wanted to see the church, the people and the service, so I went with some of the boys and enjoyed it very much. It's always amusing to me to see people in obvious Sunday clothes—and believe me, this particular scene was delightful! The mingled pride and discomfort of the children in their unaccustomed grandeur was a rich bit of humor in itself.

(I've been resting here in a corner of the "precipice walk" for an hour or so. My first interruption has just come. Two little girls, each perhaps four, have come to give me a flower. After some effort they've put it in my buttonhole, and now they're standing back to admire me—I mean *it!* Now they've gone again.) After dinner came the welcome news that we were free until ten-thirty—an unheard-of holiday. Some of us immediately decided to hike to a neighboring town—quite a large town, which, as one of my French friends expressed it, had been "*beaucoup battu*." After a walk of some five or six kilometers, we came upon the town—what there was of it. Street after street laid waste, with nothing but crumbling walls like brown stalagmites, and here and there a patched-up

shack, usually labeled "*Café et Débit de boissons.*" The streets, on the contrary, are perfect—curbs, gutters and roadway intact and clean—and from the spasmodic efforts one sees everywhere, the town is evidently starting, after all these long months, to rise from its stunned lethargy and go about its business. There is an old, old church near the outskirts of the town which had been a ruin for half a century or more. At the time of the bombardment, there were standing the vine-clad tower and at some distance a fairly well-preserved nave. It was quite precious as a bit of ancient architecture, but to the *Boche* artillery it was just another building. As a result, the tower, now a stable and chicken coop, is scarred with big black shell-holes, and the nave, beneath its red-tiled patches, shows the way by which several big shells forced their uncere-monious entrance. It is almost weird to see this room, with its vaulted, groined roof, and morsels of brilliant decoration still intact, with a portrait of the Virgin over the high altar, and other treasures scattered around—now a carpenter shop and wagon-house, with chickens clucking about in the straw that covers the floor, and the sun streaking in through the ancient stained glass onto American harvesting machines, grindstones and odds and ends of every sort and kind!

As we continued on up the street, we came to a little *café*. There we lost two members of our party. When we had had our *vin blanc* we were ready for more ruins. Not so "Sully" and Yarish; they preferred interiors—their own and that of the *café*. There was a pretty little barmaid there, who had lost two fingers, thanks to the playful sword of a Prussian guard. "Sully" got quite friendly with her, and, thanks to his handsome countenance, got himself invited to dinner. When we returned four or five hours later, the boys were still there. Meanwhile we had seen the rest of the town. The main street is in fairly good repair now, and there one sees a few people going about their business, others sitting in doorways, and blue-clad *poilus* standing about in groups, or half-hidden, with head and shoulders in some first-story window, chatting with some *demoiselle*.

We passed a church which had been quite a landmark for some distance, and which almost seemed Spanish in style, its square tower surmounted by a red, pyramidal roof. When we drew near, we found it to be the parish church—a beautiful Gothic structure, but wrecked beyond repair, it would seem.

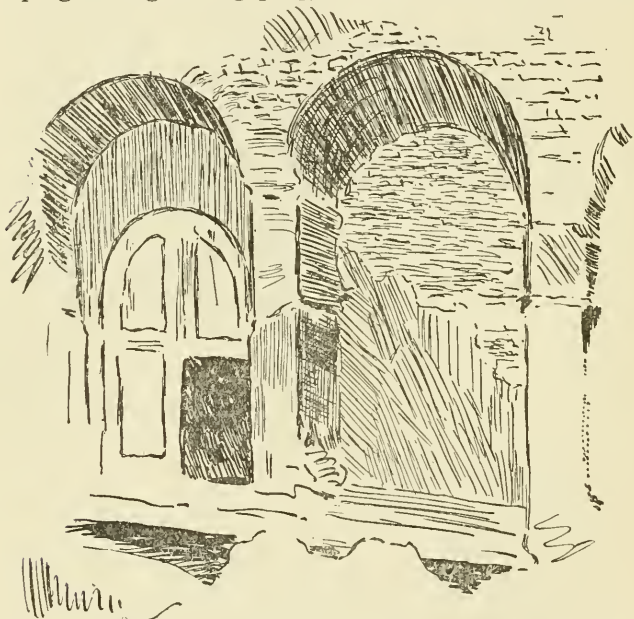
The remnants of the tower have been sheltered from the rain by the red roof which had proved so deceptive. The approach to the front entrance is completely occupied by a Red Cross hut, where I obtained two aspirin tablets, thereby vanquishing the first headache I've had in France.

You can't imagine the impression that new ruins make on me. It's entirely different from the effects of time; it seems as though all hell had suddenly been thrust into the middle of things, and then withdrawn as suddenly. There's no softening of shattered, broken lines—they're hard and cruel, like fresh wounds. The homes are different; time has softened them, and repairs have taken much of that effect from them; but the churches, the big structures that have been struck, are still much as they were, and probably will remain so until the war ends.

I noticed a sign "*Rue du Chateau.*" Said I: "If there's such a street, there must be such a place;" so I inquired, and following directions we soon found ourselves at the entrance to the park, with the towering rear walls of the *chateau* just inside the fence.

Schmitt, Clubley and I went bravely in, without asking permission, and soon were down in the depths of the place, groping around in the crooked arched passageways of the wine-cellars. I wonder how many casks of old *Malvoisie* have been tapped in those dark, cobwebby corners? As we came around one curve, we noticed a beam of light. We continued on, and came to an arched entrance. Inside, in one of the cellars, sat a group of *poilus* around a fire, munching their evening mess. We passed on, and mounted a circular stairway of stone. This brought us to the grand hallway—open to the sky, and covered with debris, but still majestic in its ruins. Opposite the doorway was a marble tablet—"François de—Duc de—Marechal de France." The deletions were made, not by voluntary censorship, but by the bombardment!

As we wandered through the almost endless rooms, with their grass-grown floors and bits of half-buried brick and marble, I couldn't help rebuilding in my mind the scenes that might have happened before the storm broke—the beruffled and bepowdered grandees of long ago—the more sedate affairs of later days, and now—blue sky peeping through the gaping, vacant windows that break



through four-foot stone walls; here the wreck of a huge gold frame that had once displayed some priceless portrait; bits of delicate frescoes and borders still clinging to the plastered walls; shattered remnants of marble pillars, doorsteps and balusters; in one corner a draped tarpaulin, sheltering a dozen stored trench mortars; there, one unharmed window; here two thirds of a perfect groined arch, the rest in ruins on the ground; at the end of that dark passage, another room, sheltering no longer dukes, but horses. *Sic transit gloria mundi!*

We scrambled out of the *chateau*, across the bridge and along the bank, to find a place for Schmitty to go at his sketching. Clubley, too, had his sketch book out, and roamed here and there getting "bits" which will prove mighty interesting when the Great War is history. Meanwhile, I wandered about in the park—a beautiful place, with every sort of tree and bush in the full glory of centuries of cultivation plus four years of uncultivated freedom. The place has gained rather than lost in beauty by its freedom from the gardener's clippers. Here and there, through the trees, one gets a glimpse of the *chateau* itself, its ruined condition hardly noticeable in the distance.

It was sunset when I returned. "Schmitty" had almost finished his sketch, and after a moment or two we once more climbed the ruined grand stairway to view the sunset through a large window. That scene, Schmitt didn't—*couldn't*—paint; but I'll never forget it.

When we got back to the main street, we dropped in a little restaurant for a few eggs; and there in a window I saw something that started me philosophizing;—a pensive French maiden, probably the proprietor's daughter, busily at work sewing—gifts for soldiers? No, a bit of fancy work! And it was right; there, in a demolished wreck of a city, what she needs most of all is to forget



that twenty kilos away her countrymen are dying. The little New York butterfly, on the other hand, needs nothing so much as to realize that there is really a war going on Somewhere in France. She needs that realization a whole lot more than Sammy needs her socks!



Hereabouts, the French are very much our friends. On the way back from the town, we passed a *café*, and nothing would do but that we must stretch our arms through the window and shake hands with every Frenchman in there!

At last, after a very full day, "home and to bed."

*Monday, June 24th*

Today, until five o'clock, has borne a very strong family resemblance to the other days of our stay here—except that this afternoon we revelled in the comfort of a shady orchard, where our mechanism classes were held.

This evening, Sarge Ford and I went roaming around the town as usual. In the tobacco shop we discovered a picture postal which informed us that this village also possesses a *chateau*—though in this case one very ancient, and now in ruins. A few words of inquiry took us off the main road, up a side street, and then up a narrow path between two houses. A moment's climb brought us to our destination. The *chateau* is a very confusing study, as the standing parts of the walls have been for the most part commandeered by later generations, to serve as *piece de resistance* for a half dozen or more farmhouses. The chapel, however, seemed less hidden beneath new construction than the rest, so we made for it. *Madame* found us in her garden, and very gladly offered to show us "her *chateau*"—it's pathetically like a child of hers, and she knows the history of every store. She took us into their living rooms—built by her grandfather in the ruins, and looking today very similar to the farmhouses around it. We climbed the old stone circular stairway, which dates from the thirteenth century; saw the stone arches, now bricked up, where the chapel windows had been; saw rooms where *Boche* soldiers were billeted back in the gray days when the enemy were here; then nothing would do but we must go out and see the dungeon, where at the time of the bombardment, many of them took shelter. A stone dropped takes four seconds to strike the water; and a wisp of lighted paper shows the solid construction that has stood for five hundred years.

Then *Madame* took us back up to her watch-tower—one of the old strongholds of the place, now grass-grown



and flower-dotted. There she has "watched the world go by," as she expressed it, all her life. She picked us each four flowers, and decked us with them. "That" she said, with the first one, "is the *Croix de Guerre*; that, the *Medaille Militaire*; that, the *Legion d'Honneur*; and that (pinning on the one last one) is from myself!" (I enclose the posies.)

We climbed down the path, and came on a little *estaminet*. In French, I inquired if they had anything to eat. The regretful negative response of the proprietor brought a *poilu* to my side. "*Camarade*, you are hungry?" Of course we were hungry. "*Moi, je suis cuisinier. Venez avec moi.*" We went—followed him down crooked streets, into a barn, where eggs were found; then out, and off again to his quarters, where in a jiffy, our eggs were fried, and bread, coffee and *paté* were on the table. How much? *Oh, deux francs pour chacun.*" We ate, thanks to his kindness; and then went back with him to the center of the town, where, right in the open street, a "movie" was in progress, the product of the military entertainment system that France maintains for her soldiers. We laughed over several comedies, and continued the *entente cordiale* by means of our chocolate and *Friend Poilu's* peanuts. Then we retired to bed, gladder than ever to be with the boys in horizon blue, in the land of the *Fleur de Lis*.

Tuesday, June 25th

After our day's work on the range and on manoeuvres, we returned to the billets. A corporal from one of the other American machine gun companies came in. "Say, I understand you've got a quartette." We had. "We're going to give a little blow-out tonight, for the French instructors—they've



been so decent to us. Will you help out?" Why, sure we would—not only with a quartette, but with piano-playing Pete and Clubley—*première danseuse*. (By the way, "Lovely" (that's his nickname) made that sketch showing himself as he appeared—*à la orientale*.) We needed a piano—and got one, though we had to go half way to the next town and drag it to the hall on a hay-wagon. You'd have died laughing to see me up on the wagon, playing ditties, while fourteen Sammies dragged the wagon, and the natives stared!

After a very haphazard and riotously appreciated soiree, ending with the Marseillaise and the Star-Spangled Banner, the "talent," the instructors and the French officers adjourned to a side street, where flowed a keg of beer. Under its soothing influence, the whole crowd, regardless of uniform or language, sang and cheered and carried on in the most thrilling way you ever saw—Yankee "pep" and French effervescence set a-bubbling by the combined effects of comradeship and beer.

After I had retired to my not-so-very-downy couch, and had slept a minute or two, Clubley came crawling across our sleeping forms, on his way to bed. The silence of the dark room was suddenly broken by Spencer's sleepy voice, shouting, "Say, if it's just the same to you, I'll pick my own nose!" Clubley, groping in the dark, had engaged poor Spencer's nasal decoration and nearly yanked it off!

*Wednesday, June 26th*

Today practically finished our course. We rejoin the company tomorrow night. Just as I was retiring, I was called down to the officers' quarters to play the piano for the party the American officers were giving the French—quite picturesque, me in that setting, eh?

*Thursday, June 27th*

Tonight we moved and got back with the company, arriving about ten-thirty.

*Friday, June 28th*

I'm closing this section of diary in order to get it in with tonight's lot of mail.

After our arrival last night in the deserted section of country where we found the rest of the company, we simply threw ourselves on the straw in our billets and went to sleep. This morning we went down to a much-improved morning mess, and after that went through a light day's work—gas-drill, pistol instruction and the like. This place is nothing but a scattered group of houses—perhaps eight. There are no *estaminets* at all, but at intervals there appears on the road a baby carriage, wheeled by a little French damsel. The carriage is full of beer!—and pretty good beer, too, the fellows say.

At last we've been issued summer caps, much like those our officers have worn all the time. Also new rolled leg-gins—only when they handed those out, P. R. C. was "out o' luck"—they were all gone when he got there. However, wars are not won by leggins!

Our billet here is amusing. We're way up on the top of a hill; and that wasn't enough, but Old Dame Fate had to escort us up two ladders and a flight of cantankerous steps to get to our hay-loft. The result is that all day you hear the cry "Going up, 'Spence'? Bring down my mess-kit, will ya?" or "Hey-y-y-y, Boucher! Bring down my belt and helmet when you come."

When drills for the day ended, I wrote a few letters. Then came mess, and then—ah, uncounted joy! A bath, in a little stream about three degrees colder than lemon ice; and for companions, one bee, seven horseflies, seven regiments of mosquitoes and at least 987,000 gnats. However, a liberal arm-swinging kept them at bay, and I finally got dressed again, and oh, boy! how good I felt. Then, garbed in my outer but minus my inner clothes, I went and protested to an old French grandmother that I simply *had* to have my two sets of "undies" washed before morning. Because I was a *soldat americain qui savait causer en français*, Madame agreed. Then I hit the hay, convinced that I'd done a good day's work.

Where we are now, the Allied and *Boche* planes are fond of having little air-scraps, and not only caress each other with machine gun bullets, but make it necessary for the anti-aircraft guns to pelt them with shrapnel from the

ground. The law of gravity decrees that the lead and iron that is thus carelessly chucked about must eventually return to earth, falling, just as rain does, on the just and the unjust. Therefore, when an aero appears, there's a bugler on the job blowing "Attention." Then we all take cover under roofs and trees. Only one or two of the fellows have even seen a piece of the stuff. The wonder is where it all does fall.

*Saturday, June 29th*

We're going up soon, to take up some rear positions in the support lines of the front here. There is quite a lot of rejoicing among the fellows that we're going to see *something*, even if it's only the back-door of the war—you can learn more up there in a day than you'd learn in a month behind the lines.

Our sergeants have gone up today with our officers to look over the gun positions, so we have had quite an easy day of it, lying on the grass under the trees (not for comfort, but for *camouflage!*), studying the mechanism of the Hotchkiss.

(*Afternoon*) The word has gone round that we're to move tonight, so I'll have to roll the li'l old pack. I'll finish later.

And now it's next morning, and we had *some* hike. Struck right up a huge hill from our billets, and then along on a very good road through a large wood. After a long walk, we reached the outskirts of a village, where we fell out on the roadside for over half an hour, awaiting orders. Finally we started off again, and no sooner were we started than we landed in the midst of an impenetrable forest—the thickest I have ever seen. Huge evergreens and other trees shut in the road all along on both sides, so that the Black Hole of Calcutta seemed light by comparison. To add to the spookiness of it, the left hand side of the road was on the edge of a steep incline, and we had to keep an interval of fifteen yards between platoons, despite the fact that you couldn't see your hand before your face! To keep from getting lost, our squad locked arms, and jogged along that way. Once in a while we'd crack our noses against the packs of the rank in front. Soon the order

came "Incline to the left!" and in a minute or two, we passed several big Allied guns, hidden there in the woods. In all the miles we walked, I don't think we were out of concealment half an hour.

At last (it was one-twenty A. M.) we came to our destination, the most picturesque spot you ever saw. Right in the midst of this impenetrable forest is a little village of summer-houses—some thatched, some trimmed with designs of rustic work—one with a little steeple and clock. They are all weather-beaten, and must have been here some years. There are other newer and less picturesque barracks about, but the little gems are very numerous. One group of them is used for officers' quarters. They're built around a little square called "*Promenade de la Gaieté*." The other paths all have names, and the houses themselves are decorated with fancy titles. Over it all rises this impenetrable forest, screening the whole from observation.

"Con" and I were too tired to pitch our tent, so we just rolled up in our blankets and overcoats and slept—until one of the French guns near us let loose about six this morning and woke us up—the derved crab! And by that operation it celebrated the beginning of—

*Sunday, June 30th*

All morning we lounged around under the trees, wrote letters, stood in line at the Y. M. C. A. canteen for the cakes, Bull Durham and one cake of chocolate that are allowed each man. No, the "Bull" was not for me, but for a pal who was piggy-wiggly enough to want *two*!

We spent the afternoon lazily, recovering from our long drag of the night before, and it wasn't until after dinner that our plans were announced. The first and third platoons are to leave tonight, to take up the gun positions, while we remain here for two days. Then we'll go up to relieve one platoon or the other, I don't know which. Hotchkiss guns were issued to all of us, and part of the day was spent in cleaning them. Then we watched the rest of the fellows start off after mess, with guns and packs, to take up their positions on the line—the boys of Company D at last "on their way" for fair, making good the promise of our favorite song. The rest of us were at



last assigned to barracks, and thus enabled to remove our goods and chattels from their rather-too-public location on the ground under a tree. Our barracks is very comfortable indeed; there are two long rows of bunks, upholstered with fresh hemlock boughs, very provocative of slumber. The only guard we have to maintain here is a "gas-guard," who stands at one end of the hut listening for gas-alarms. If he hears a Klaxon horn sounding, he grabs his helmet and administers an unholy wallop to an empty shell-case (an old French 75) which serves the purpose of a bell. Fortunately, there was no need to hit the old thing, so we all slept peacefully till morning.

*Monday, July 1st*

Oh, the joys of those who are left behind, "resting"! Gun class, gas-drill, and detail, detail, detail! "Four men to collect wood." "Eight men to carry mess up to the gun teams." "Six men for this." "Four men for that"! Believe me, life back here in the reserves is not *all* roses! Of course, it's necessary work, and the reserves are the logical men to do it. I merely wanted to register the fact that your Sammy behind the lines "on rest" does his little chores, too! About four o'clock the news came. "There's a big bag of mail down at Battalion Headquarters. H— is bringing it up." But H— didn't; and the boys grouched. Then the news got round that someone else was bringing it, and the indicator swung round and once more pointed at Contentment. But alas for the slips!—once more Fate was against us, and the whole outfit placed a chip on its shoulder, just above the inevitable gas-mask, and made its grumbling way to bed. I merely mention this to emphasize how much letters mean to the boys over here. They're just like kids about them, and "How many dj'you get?" is the question of the day. It doesn't make any difference what they are—a love-letter, an ad or a tailor's bill—they all count the same, and you never see the happy "high man" admit that any of his are anything but sure-fire, gold-plated, bear-cat letters. But tell the home-folks this: The boys are busy. And in the National Army one goes to bed at dark, whether one's correspondence is up to date or not. So in measure of



value, a Sammy's hastily-scribbled post-card is worthy of a higher ranking than many a carefully-penned home letter turned out at a comfortable desk in an off hour or two. With which bit of philosophy we'll begin another day—

*Tuesday, July 2nd*

This is the day we've been looking forward to for some moons—the day when, by Divisional order, all officers and men will wear their "false faces" for four hours continuously, meantime going about their regular duties.

A gas-mask is your best friend, but after four hours in its loving embrace, you're more than glad to let its clinging amorousness sink into a mere platonic friendship. It tattoos your forehead with a neat red stripe; it most bites the end off your perfectly good nose, and it says in a voice that cannot be denied, "You cough, sneeze or snicker inside of me, and I'll get square with you." All in all, it takes considerable liberties with your peace of mind, even for a best friend!

During the morning I conducted a class in the mechanism of the Hotchkiss for the benefit of the Headquarter-men, who had not attended school. Then came mess—and after that, the good old false faces. The first hour we whiled away in the gentle pastime of stripping the gun; then we rested, and then—whoopee! In came the mail. Working under difficulties, it was distributed, and then the queer-looking masked figures wandered off, each to a tree-trunk, there to open and read letters from home, smiles hidden behind the expressionless masks with their big, staring eyes and snout-like noses.

I got twenty-two letters, including all your missing ones, two from C., and others from S., B.'s big one, some from the office, and other odds and ends—the most totally satisfactory mail I've had yet! They kept me so completely interested that I forgot the old mask was on till it was time to take it off! No sooner did we get our masks off than we were marched out to the pistol range, where with the other fellows, under the captain's instruction, we fired our automatics for the first time. The captain, by the way, is a dead shot. The same can't be said of me—yet!

I did, however, manage to get five of my seven shots inside the big ring, though the old "Gat" sure did kick! By this time (it was ten minutes of seven) we were sure the marching orders had been changed—but not so. It's a good sample of Army snap, this: in less than an hour from the time we got back to the barracks, we had supper, rolled our packs, filled our canteens and were off on our way to relieve the first platoon.

Our way lay down a road that was at one time heavily shelled, and the broken, tangled maze of trunks and branches that still block the path made it rather heavy going for the boys with their packs and the machine guns, too. Hanging from various parts of me were these things: one pack; one gas-mask; one pair of field-glasses; one belt; one revolver; one canteen; and three neat, heavy, compact little tool-bags! Your little "Pete" looked very like a Christmas tree.

We climbed into and out of shell-holes, passed off the road, and into a thicket of birches and second-growth beech, these also quite a bit cut up by shell-fire—at an earlier date, thank goodness. Our way was indicated by bits of white paper attached to trees and sticks here and there.

At last we were halted by a sentry, gave the password, and were admitted to the trench. There we found our fellows, all ready to go back. I took the instructions for my gun from the corporal I was relieving, and then set about examining our quarters.

We're holding what is known as the "second line." Nothing much happens here except when the enemy attacks and licks the first line, which is quite a distance away. As it's a very quiet sector, it's hardly like real war, but the scenery is genuine enough to suit anyone! Our trench is situated on the side of a hill, overlooking a valley and another hill beyond. Behind us are other trenches which seem to be held by some infantry reserves. The old ditch is about thirty yards long, and at each end is a dugout—one or two-room affair, with a little area at the rear, and a place for a kitchen beyond that. The dugout is lined with wood, and has a ceiling of corrugated

iron. Above this there is a solid layer of sandbags and stone perhaps four feet thick. We didn't much like the looks of that place, so we wandered down the trench to the other dugout. This was a veritable palace compared with the other; and so in that one we bunked.

*Wednesday, July 3rd*

Last night, our first in a trench, was interesting, to say the least. When the other platoon left us in command, the evening "stand-to"—nine-thirty to ten-thirty—was nearly over. Our gun-guards and our gas-guard were arranged, and the rest of us rolled into our bunks and instantly to sleep.

At about quarter past twelve we were awakened by the cry "Gas!" Sullivan came scrambling through the passage-way, dropped the two gas-curtains and landed in the dugout—and by the time he got there, we were all awake, masked, and waiting for something to happen.

It turned out that no great amount of gas reached our vicinity. The signals of gas are given by horns, which are presided over by sentries. When Mr. Sentry blows his horn, it's of course heard and repeated by all the sentries for miles around. The result is that the alarm goes a good deal further—and quicker—than the gas. Sullivan went out to see what he could see, and came crawling and swearing back in a minute—our first casualty. No, not from the gas, but from a neatly twisted ankle. Soon after, the excitement subsided, and we all went to sleep again—but "Uncle Pete" got only an hour or so, because his trick of guard came at two-thirty. When I came out of the dugout, there was a misty moon in the sky, and thrown in black relief against it a ragged line of shell-torn pines, rising above the rough silhouette of the trench-top. There was hardly a sound to be heard—an occasional sentry's single rifle-shot—the dull quiver of a far-distant gun—now and then "b-r-r-r-p!"—a machine gun in the distance opening fire for a minute or so; then silence again. At three-thirty came "stand-to;" all the crew (there are nine of us here) is awakened, and remains on the alert for an hour. At about four it began to grow light, and Conboy went down the embankment to our gun emplacement to

bring in our gun. I didn't notice his return, and was leaning against the trench-wall talking to Clubley, when suddenly, out of the corner of my eye, I saw a silent, motionless figure, in uniform and helmet, on the far end



"A SILENT,  
MOTIONLESS FIGURE"  
by Clubley

of our dugout roof. "Oh, that's Con," I whispered. "No, 'Con' just passed going the other way," said "Lovely." Suddenly, "It's the captain!" he said. "Halt him!" "I can't," I whispered, "He's halted already." So there I stood, with my hand on my holster, waiting for my captain to move. At last he did, and I drew the old Colt and halted him—rather badly, I fear, then the challenge was completed quite neatly. But it was a great joke on me all right, and the captain got a very good little snicker out of it. Of course, I should have challenged him while he stood there, but in my

bright lexicon there was a gap. After some questioning, the captain departed, and soon after I went back to bed.

With the coming of morning, we've had a better chance to examine our bedroom. It has a very "lived-in" air; it looks as if a very fastidious gun-team had spent quite a while here. The log ceiling is perhaps seven feet from the floor. There are three entrances, one of which leads to our trench, one in the opposite direction, and one out onto the hillside, where there is an artillery emplacement, now vacant. Each entrance is closed by two gas-blankets.

These are merely snug-fitting blanket curtains, kept constantly damp, and reinforced by wooden crosspieces. These are opened by day, and all but one are dropped at night. The furnishings consist of two tiers of bunks accommodating eight or ten, and fitted with very comfortable straw mattresses. Across the little room is a wall desk, of rough boards, and above it half a dozen shelves. It's big enough for two, and Sarge Ford and I are both busily writing at it now, by the light of two candles. The supports and the ceiling are of huge eight or ten inch logs, and, of course, above that there's a heavy layer of earth. There's a very good stove, which we haven't yet lighted, but which promises well for tonight. There's a miz-maze of tangled wires on the ceiling, that speaks of past signal equipment which had its part in the "big doings" which once took place here. The rest of the equipment is nails—nails everywhere, on which everything is hung. It's the first place I've struck since I've been in the army where there are enough nails—but in this place you can scrape your helmet against the wall in the dark—and there'll be a nail for it to hang on!

This morning our breakfast was brought up to us in "dixies"—(big camp kettles)—and the coffee in a patent container which kept it steaming hot. It tasted mighty good, too, believe me!

The morning has been without event; I've spent it here at the desk; and now it's nearly time for our grub to appear on the scene again.

(*Later*) A little delay in the arrival of our lunch was caused by the presence overhead of a couple of *Boche* planes. All messengers are supposed to "duck" when planes are sighted, so that observers will not be able to get any clue from their presence. For the same reason, we were told, on arriving here, to leave everything about the trench—old boxes, tin cans, bits of wood—exactly as they were when we came. This prevents enemy *avions* from getting any new information on their eagle-eyed camera plates.

When our mess arrived, there came a few cakes of chocolate, purchased in the next town by a thoughtful



messenger and resold to us—also a very few candles, which, with mess and mattresses, are the things which make life worth living out here.

This afternoon, I made a "range card" for my gun, showing the various landmarks in our field of fire, with the approximate ranges of each. Then I snoozed until evening mess, and again afterwards until "stand-to," at nine thirty. By the way, that's a feature of the life out here that makes it unique. You get your sleep when you can—and your opportunities for a nap, while numerous, are so broken up that day and night no longer seem to have their old significance. This effect is heightened by the pitch-dark, candle-lit dugout, the aspect of which never changes—'cept when the candles get used up!

When we started evening "stand-to," the captain appeared and gave us a few instructions. Then he trudged off again, leaving our nine alone in the trench. And such a polyglot mixture, that nine! I don't think there could be a more perfect epitome of the National Army than we—nor could the things that the army is doing for American boys be more plainly portrayed. There in the trench we stood—Sergt. Ford, of Larchmont Manor—slight, fine-featured, somewhat delicate in appearance—a stock-broker by profession; Spalding—window-trimmer in Bedell's Buffalo store, and every inch a gentleman; big, handsome, loud-voiced Sullivan, whose heart is as big as his voice, and who is as capable as he is lazy; "Baron" Bean, ex-candy-maker, ex-knight of the road, and incidentally ex-corporal, who can and does sleep more than any two other men in the company—who sends home to his mother ten dollars of his salary every month, in addition to his allotment, "because he knows she needs it;" Higgins, ex-brakeman and bunkie of the afore-mentioned Sullivan, whose blue-fire swearing-matches and vituperative scraps are the constant and sure sign that everything is all right; Hammond, sailor and world tramp, who can tell yarns of the North River and the Zulu Sea with equal ease, and who, in consequence of his migratory life, is at home anywhere; Clubley—"Lovely," as we call him, son of an English editorial writer, handsome as a young god, and apparently



coddled to death—who left motion-pictures for the army, and startled Camp Upton with his silk pajamas, his pomatum and the large number of his Packard-owning friends, to whom the luxuries of life were necessities, and the realities of life an undreamed dream; Conboy—good old faithful “Con,” balance-wheel of the outfit, and chosen bunkie of yours truly; “Con,” oldest of us all, and with a wife at home; with a life-full of experiences behind him, and a stock of rich humor which he invariably reserves for the psychological moment when it saves the day—“Con,” who has been farmer, butcher, conductor, cook, and a hundred other things, including the rôle of medical student in the University of Pennsylvania; and your humble servant—have you strength left after reading that endless sentence, to picture those nine men standing in a trench at the French battle-front, discussing religion, fatalism and the effect of the war on world-character?

Yet there we stood, a composite of experience and inexperience, of knowledge and ignorance, of sheltered theory and hard-learned fact; and because of the things we’ve all been through together, we argued as equals—*were* equals in very truth, with a tacit realization that no one of us but could claim mastery in some one phase of knowledge, and utter ignorance in others.

—And isn’t that doing more for us than the mere winning of a vital war?

When the clock in the brave little church near by struck the half-hour, we turned in—and I slept until I was awakened by Clubley, to serve my trick at guard, I woke to find that I had slept while all the dogs of war in the shape of a huge French *barrage*, had been humming, whistling and whirring over our heads. Clubley was laughing—and as I looked at him, I saw two pictures: “Lovely,” in white flannels and a white silk shirt, sipping lemonade on the wicker-furnished porch of the Binghamton Country Club, with a Pall Mall in his amber cigarette-holder and a group of admiring femininity in the offing, and Pte. Clubley, sitting on the edge of a damp trench, with a drizzling rain wetting his slicker and clots of French clay accumulating on his boots, laughing at a French *barrage*! Independence

Day, 1917—Independence Day, 1918—that's what a war can do to a man!

My watch was more quiet—I don't know what the *barrage* did to "Fritz," but he has certainly left *us* severely alone. Maybe he's mending his wire and cooking up plans. We'll see.

*Thursday, July 4th*

I'm over in the unused dugout writing this, so as not to disturb the fellows who are using our desk. It's very much quieter here than it is where you are—in fact, I haven't heard so much as a rifle-shot all morning.

The fellows who brought up our breakfast brought also a supply of our best little cheer-provokers—letters from home. The camp is much quieter than usual this morning. Most of us are writing or reading our letters. "Hig" is down in what would be No Man's Land if the *Boche* advanced a few miles, taking a bath in a shell-hole. Picturesque? Well—!

And now I must send this before it becomes a book.

*Friday, July 5th*

Another lazy day—hardly a sound from over the hills. Perhaps the *Boche* are planning new deviltries—but it's much more probable that they're washing clothes, reading magazines and writing letters, pretty much as we are. It's a curious thing of contrasts, this trench warfare; the air will be full of the screech of bullets and the noise of bursting shells; the gas alarm will throw a sector into momentary confusion. Then it all stops; and before long, the birds are singing, the bees humming—and those confounded flies biting, just as though nothing had happened. I suppose when we are promoted to the front line, things will be different, but if they are having a war over the hill there, they're keeping it mighty quiet!

"Con" has been busily clipping the unruly locks of two or three of the fellows this afternoon; that master-liaison-man, Laner, has brought us many slabs of chocolate, and rumors galore; and when Sammy can munch chocolate and listen to rumors, with his leggins off, shoes unlaced,

and only three buttons buttoned, you can put him down as a contented fighting man!

*Saturday, July 6th*

Three times last night we had to put on our old masks—and three times it was unnecessary. The Klaxon signal from the trenches is relayed all over the map, and the effective radius of a gas shell is only about a hundred yards. I hope they find some alarm system pretty soon that can be turned off. This one might be carried right on up to the North Sea! It's like knocking down a row of tin soldiers by assaulting the leader-man with a playful thumb.

We left our four-day home at about—— o'clock, and many were the regrets. It sounds funny to be regretting your departure from a residence that consisted of two burrows and a ditch, but it's a fact—we haven't lived such a comfortable existence since we left the States!

We didn't get back to camp until after ten, but nevertheless, there was Capt. Gillam in his little rustic house, waiting to pay us! We all welcomed our francs with a joy that was almost *abandon*, and then went through our regular monthly pastime of handing most of it out in small doses, to bunkies who had favored us during the month. Then we went off to our bunks, but found, to our sorrow, that the bunks we'd been inhabiting before we went to the trenches had been taken by others, so we had to go off, like "Orphant Annie," to another house, which was filled with infantrymen. We had two more fool gas alarms during the night—but a night spent among a bunch of infantry is hectic and restless enough *without* a gas alarm! Every time we "meet up" with the infantry, we're glad we're with the—"picked men," the good old M. G.'s.

*Sunday, July 7th*

Thanks to the varied interruptions of the night, "Con" and I slept until eight. And you should have seen us hustle!—"Con" to church, and your little "Pete" to the field kitchen, where, though it was an hour late, he managed to rustle a cup of coffee, some bread and syrup—which was all I wanted, anyhow. Then I lazed around

till church-time, and then sat under the trees while Chaplain Urge conducted a simple little service. He has a great deal of influence over the fellows because of his personality, and incidentally because he doesn't "preach."

After mess we wandered down the road about two miles, to the little town of ——. The civilian population has been ordered to leave there in a day or so, as the place is needed for military purposes. The town is a bit battered up, but not by any means a wreck. This probably makes the order even harder on the departing civilians than it would be if they were deserting a sinking ship. There's one place, though, where one sees no tears—that's the Y. M. C. A., one of the best we've seen in France, built inside the shell of a big, rambling old stone house. Of course, it's all very rough, but the mere sight of writing tables, a bit of a canteen where chocolate, smokes and the like are to be had, and a piano, makes quite an impression after a few weeks of camp, trenches and lonely billets. One thing that I saw there seemed to me like the breaking of the last link separating me from the old life—a copy of the *June American*, with "Pete's," the ad-man's, last two P&L spring ads in it! "Pete," the trooper, looking at his other self—it was funny.

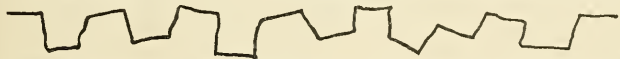
We knew we were going to be late for mess, so we supplied ourselves with a little cheese, some salmon, and some biscuits, and sat under the trees near camp to eat them—"Con," Clubley and I. For the first time in some moons, I looked at my knife with a "seeing eye." It's certainly been a good friend of mine!—but now—gee! The hole-maker snapped off; the can-opener bent double; the blade possessed of an edge like a saw; only the screwdriver retains its health! When we went to bed that night, we heard that next night we were to get us hence and visit the well-known "front-line."

*Monday, July 8th*

B—, how's this for a way to celebrate your birthday? At about — o'clock when Clubley and Spalding and I returned from a reg'lar clean-up day down at the spring, the word came that we had to go up to the front to look over

our gun positions—Sergt. Ford, Lieut. Guter, Sergt. Barnhart, Spalding and I.

Our road took us through the ruined, deserted town of —, a monument to this war's ferocity as perfect as any we've yet seen. A sharp turn and a short walk along a *camouflaged* road brought us to our first position, which was in a —. At this point we saw a *Boche* sausage balloon in the distance, and therefore approached our second place by a roundabout course, through what in peace-times would be called a miz-maze, but which in war is just a trench system, thus, so our walk was rather lengthy! The



amusing part of it is that the trenches, though —, must look very—. Finally we reached —, and there found our second position, around which the squad which our fellows will relieve had built a neat little —camp—hardly one's idea of a "front-line" position, is it? But there are all kinds of war in this little rumpus over here—open as well as the trench variety.

From there we struck right through the woods, —.

At last, after quite a lengthy scramble, we came out on the side of a hill, overlooking a marshy valley, and there, under the trees, was the position assigned to my squad. The other squad of my section was located near us, in an even more attractive spot—and the fellows whom we are to relieve gave us the welcome news that the *Boche* hasn't made it necessary for them to put on their masks or fire a shot since they've been here — days. Truly, this must be, as a French *poilu* said the other day, a "*bon front!*" Our return trip was made by another route, which led entirely through the thick woods—speaking of which, you can't imagine what things are held secret in the depths of these forests! If "Jerry's" peering eye could only pierce that foliage—but it can't!—

We were tired when we got back to camp, and so I lazed around until about six, rolled the old pack once more, gathered the clan together, swore when I found that Sarge "Mac" had docked my squad of one of its best men, Kenyon; swore less when I found that he had been replaced by



George Wood, a bully fellow and one of our best liaison men. We packed the gun wagons, loaded the ammunition carts, and started off, after surmounting the dozen-and-one little obstacles that always hang around like glooms, to slow things up.

It was nearly——when the silent column and the rattling carts at last reached the unloading point. Maybe you think it's fun to hike till ——, then unload a heavy gun and tripod, tramp with them through a spooky, tortuous, swampy wood path, mount the gun in your emplacement, and then start standing guard and executing ——. Maybe it *is* fun—but our boys couldn't quite see the joke!

*Tuesday, July 9th*

My precious two hours of sleep was worth its weight in gold; but that was all I got. I was awakened by a French corporal, who had come from his captain with orders for our two guns. They were to be moved a mere kilo—but our —— gun was lost to us—the new emplacement is in a dugout—or, if not exactly a dugout, a covered emplacement in a hillside.

Like the Arabs, we once more folded our tents—only the four gunners, mind you; the rest of our two squads stayed behind to “hold the fort” and watch over our surplus belongings. We're going to shoot a little tonight, if all goes well, and then return to our original positions.

Our new home is in a cave-like dugout in the hillside, used originally as an artillery emplacement, but long abandoned, and now inhabited only by rats, snails—and us! We still overlook the same valley, but our field of fire now includes the village of ——, a town of some pretensions which has been sadly battered by the moving tides of battle, and which is now entirely evacuated by civilians, and used only as a military base. Our residence has a dirt floor, and a ceiling just high enough to clear our heads. Our roof, which is composed of logs, railroad track, rocks and dirt, is at least six feet thick, and overgrown with grass on top. Facing out over the valley is our fire opening—a big window between the logs, through which a broad field of fire can be obtained. There is the valley—beyond that the wooded hill and beyond that—“Jerry.” We



enter by an opening near the back of the place. It seems to be pretty steady, as despite the numerous bullet and shrapnel scars on the logs, it shows no signs of caving in. It's damp, and the rats and snails seem to resent our intrusion, but still it might be a whole lot worse. Our company kitchen is located in one of the houses in the village, and thither, three times a day, a couple of our "spare numbers"—the extra men on our gun team—go with pots and pails to bring up our mess.

During the night we have ——, and it's amusing to see how hard a time the fellows have keeping awake. They're mighty good about it, though, and try every scheme imaginable—tell stories, sing songs (from which you may judge that we're not quite out in No Man's Land!) and conduct a roll-call in the pitch-black darkness every minute or two. At last the end comes, and the fellows all roll over and snore—all, that is, except the —— luckless guards, who have to sit there blinking at the stars for —— hours longer.

Sad to relate, however, our first shot at Jerry has been postponed. The weather was not propitious, so our friend the French corporal said; and now his company is being relieved by another, while he goes off "on rest"—so we may not pop off the old gun at all.

*Wednesday, July 10th*

We've spent today in waiting for something to happen—which is one of the three favorite occupations here in the lines. The other two are eating (a lot) and sleeping (a little—oh, a *very* little!). Nothing chronicle-able occurred until evening, when our *poilu* friend superintended the moving of —— huge boxes of ammunition to our dug-outs. I was amused to see one of the signs that a soldier is going to emerge from the Camp Upton chrysalis of outworn tradition that has encased one of our sergeants. We managed to scare up —— men, in addition to our sergeant and the French corporal. That made two men to each case, with one left over for a second trip—because tradition says that a sergeant must not work. But there are times and places for bugle calls, white collars, "squads right"—and the tradition that sergeants shall resemble the lilies of the field. When the awkward pause came, and no one

stepped up to the last case, Friend *Poilu* grins at me, remarks in French, "I'll carry this one myself," and grabbing up the huge thing, throws it up on his shoulder. It stayed there perhaps three seconds, and then our Sarge saw the point; and soon the case was swinging along the road, suspended on a long stick that rested each end on a shoulder—one of khaki, the other of horizon blue. That night our friend left, and the little rumpus once more did not appear. We've now just about given up hope of getting our gun into action during this visit to the lines. However, here's hoping for better luck next time.

*Thursday, July 11th*

After a grand, snoozy morning, I decided to step down to —, to see what I could see. Instead of taking the main road, I walked along our hillside, stepping over occasional barbed wire, and walking around old shell-holes, and others not so old; reaching at last a little hidden path. Following this way, I passed stone gateways and steps that lead into forgotten gardens, which now flourish in half-wild luxuriance, although the homes they once adjoined have long since disappeared, the tall grass kindly covering what remnants the artillery left. At the end of this path there is a gateway that leads into another garden—the outermost of the town proper. Here, under the rank growth of weeds, nestled berries, poppies, phlox, and other bits of color, all, of course, very stunted and unkempt but still persistent. From this point on the buildings are standing, though much battered, of course, both by the original bombardments of the early days, and by the occasional shells which still wander in.

A door led me through a barn, and out into a grass-grown *cul de sac*, which led up to the main street. Everywhere was silence—I've dubbed it for myself, The Silent City. One gets the impression that things just suddenly ceased, as they did in Pompeii—it's almost gruesome! Of course, the roads have been cleared, and dugouts in the cellars have been built for use as billets; the main street is more active, with the commandant's headquarters in the *Hotel de Ville*, its shattered windows filled with sand-bags, and great barricades of stone around its walls; the

billets of a few French and American soldiers, a French canteen, and a field dressing station, scattered here and there between ruined and deserted buildings.

We stopped at the dressing station to get some dope for "Con's" cold; and before long were invited to their "little bit o' heaven," as they call it, up in one of the big second-floor rooms of the house. Up the bare stairway we clattered—and when we got to the top, we almost collapsed! There, inside the door, was "Paradise enow"—rugs on the floor, luxuriously upholstered chairs, lace curtains at the windows, draperies and pictures on the walls, a lace tablecloth on the dining-room table, and upon it neat bowls, dishes and a vase of roses, a piano in the corner, two huge gold-framed mirrors on the walls, and a medical buck private half-buried in a huge chair reading a newspaper! All this with the first-line trenches ten minutes' walk away! All of it, of course, was flotsam—salvaged from the surrounding ruins—but it was certainly a vision of delight to us. We stayed a few minutes, played the piano a bit, and then returned to our hole in the ground, to our regular round of guard, "stand-to," and sleep.

*Friday, July 12th*

I forgot two important events in my chronicle of yesterday—our visit to the pottery, the temporary departure of Sergt. Ford, and my consequent accession to the very doubtful honor of Acting Section Sergeant.

The pottery is on the far end of the town, beyond the railroad—which, by the way, is all rusted and overgrown with grass; and before "Jerry" and "Jean" started pummeling each other, it must have been a very imposing place. Except for two of the big chimneys, it's not much damaged—and when we went in to explore it, we found out very quickly why we had seen our friends, the medics and the *poilus* of the vicinity, eating their army mess on crockery fit for a king. Room after room is full of china, finished, half-finished, cracked and broken—some good as new; and we availed ourselves of one or two small pieces, which will find their way to you in the mail before long, if I'm lucky. When we got home, we found that Sarge Ford was ordered off to anti-aircraft school, which fact gave

"Uncle Pete" his momentous, even if only momentary, promotion. Now it's "Randy" who orders the K. P.'s and the guard to their daily task, who fills out the daily report, with the news of all the shots fired, aeroplanes sighted, rockets, balloons and other machinery of war that comes within sight or earshot during each day and night; who gets the messages and arranges the details—*some* job!

### *Saturday, July 13th*

When our morning snooze, our afternoon pistol practice and our other daily duties were done, the effects of our visit to the medics' Paradise began to show themselves. Someone looked around our shack and remarked in a matter-of-fact way, "This is rotten." We agreed. Someone else said, "Well —," and the tone of voice was constructive. Two minutes later, and we were all at work—one hustling to brush the dirt off the floor, another fixing hooks, assembling our stock of reading material, and juggling up a table—made of four big cartridge boxes and the wooden door which by night serves "Con" and myself as a bed, the benches, two plants and four small ammunition boxes; a bunch of flowers and four lighted candles made our centerpiece, and a small stock of preserves, sardines and nuts made of our evening mess a banquet indeed!

"Con" and I have discovered a new way of keeping awake when we're on guard together. We pick a subject—The War, Capital vs. Labor, Advertising—almost anything on which we can disagree—and it seems hardly a minute before we're waking up our relief!

### *Sunday, July 14th*

Funny how life in the front line flattens everything down to an even monotony! We woke up this morning at about eight, and it wasn't until nearly noon that we discovered that besides being Sunday (which was quite a discovery in itself)—it was also the 14th—the glorious *Quatorze Juillet*—*Bastille Day*. Back in London, Paris and New York, parades, speeches, flying flags and countless other festivities mark the day as a red-letter event. But here, it's just another day.

I went to our Number Eleven position this morning, with our liaison man, to talk over a few things with Sarge Barnhart. As we walked through the woods, some German shells started to whistle over the treetops. We stopped, listened to see where they were falling, and then continued, as one does here, without giving them any further attention. When we got back to our own dugout at noon, though, we found that some hadn't been so lucky. One of our gun positions, some two or three kilos from ours, was struck by a shell, and as a result Co. D has registered its first casualty. We're glad to hear, though, that Rex's wound is not serious, and that after he gets patched up he'll be able to join us again, as good as new, and richer by one sporty wound-stripe and an enviable calling-list of pretty Red Cross nurses!

The event of the afternoon was the return of our good pal, Corp. Francis, from Anti-Aviation Machine Gun School. Our section is now nearly full, a fact which enables us to guard the camp adequately, and still get a little sleep—which I am about to do.

### *Monday, July 15th*

A couple of letters for me and none for anyone else—so much for having English relatives and daily home-letters.

Our day was enlivened by the antics of one Vincent, who before being a soldier, had graduated as circus man, harmonica player, jig artist and Knight of the Road. He has trod the ties and ridden the rails from every nook and corner of the States to every other—so you can imagine that he's quite a vaudeville show all by himself!

### *Tuesday, July 16th*

As I write this, I'm sitting in our dugout, looking out of the window at the brilliant East. I've been on guard since four o'clock, and I've been watching the dawn. When I came out, there was a faint bit of pale yellow just between the hilltop and the clouds; but in a moment it began to change, the clouds became a tawny copper-color, shading into tortoiseshell, and outlined in slate drab against a constantly changing sky—now pale lemon, and now changing to a transparent greenish-blue. Three stars



persisted, and I decided, like the little boy, to find out where they went when they went out. So I watched and watched—until finally an aeroplane came over, and I had to visit my intelligence report inside; there a *Paris New York Herald* tempted me, and behold, when I again looked at my sky, it was day—my stars had fooled me and skipped—and still I don't know where they went. Never mind—I'll catch 'em another day.

I'm perched on an ammunition box in our shack, with our gun for a back-rest and my knees for a desk. On the floor around me are the fellows— —— of 'em—sleeping. "Con" has been bothered by the flies, and has been tossing around quite a bit. Just now he opened one eye, stared at me, murmured, "'Lo, Pete," and rolled over. The rest of the boys might be sandbags—they haven't moved a muscle. That's the way you sleep out here, only a little while, but full-speed for Slumberland every time.

And now that —— days have elapsed, I find at last time enough to chronicle some of our moves during the hectic times that followed.

At about dusk we received orders to move—this time to a position not so very far from the one we had had—but nevertheless, it meant packing up the endless odds and ends that go with a squad and a gun, and mooching over several hundred yards to the new location. We are now in a dugout that is as remarkable as any I have yet seen—carved out of the solid rock, and with a tunnel connecting it to a wooden shack fully twenty yards away. At the entrance is a conical structure of masonry which is either the tomb of some favorite French artilleryman, or the fanciful dream of some French soldier-mason with more time than brains. From this you may judge, however, that this is *some* dugout!

Francis and I took out the range-finder (a remarkable instrument, by the way, which costs as much as a Ford, can be carried on the back, and faithfully records for the initiated the distance to any object ten thousand yards distant or less), and I made up a rough range-card for our new position. Then we turned in for the night (which in the army means for an hour at a time!).



*Wednesday, July 17th*

During my watch from four to six this morning I sat in front of our dugout drawing up a finished drawn-to-scale range card. A little celluloid three-inch ruler, the string of my gas-mask, and the safety-pin that holds most of my clothes up, were my tools, and with them I managed to make circles, straight lines and curves to my heart's content and the captain's satisfaction.

During the morning, the captain came around again, this time to tell us that once more our position would be changed—this time, however, to a location nearly a mile away. The li'l old gun carts are coming up at dark to help us, so I hope that our *fourth* move will be completed without any great struggle.

(*Later*) It was accomplished—but it was quite a neat little job, at that. I sent my liaison man, Wood, down through the Silent City to ——— where our headquarters are, to lead the wagons out to our position. Then when our packs were fully rolled and our gun equipment piled ready to load, we waited—waited while the sun sank and the moon rose, and it got darker by the minute. Finally, though, the rattle of our carts sounded through the night, and soon we had them packed and were following our shadows through the midnight, moonlit streets of the Silent City, doubly soundless now,—and on along the white road, hung with its *camouflaged* hemlock branches, until we reached a break in the barrier. There, in a shell-hole, perhaps ——— from the road, was our gun position and there, huddled together, with overcoats and slickers for covering, we alternately slept and stood guard till morning.

*Thursday, July 18th*

This morning we moved our packs down the road about ——— yards, to a house where one of our squads is already quartered. Their gun is ———, and unlike ours, is blessed with a trench and a dugout. But nevertheless, right in front of the door is a neat little round hole—the shell-hole made by the "*obus*" that wounded Rex Thornton! However, when we saw the room assigned to us, we worried precious little about shells! A real bed, a table, a couple

of chairs, and a real, dry, second-floor *floor*, on which one could sleep snail-less, mud-less, and comparatively rat-less—in fact, in luxury! And sleep we did, a large part of the day, though I did find time to make a range-card for our new position and do a few other military chores.

During the day the order came through that tonight only——would be on duty at our gun during the night, except during the hours of “stand-to.” This makes it a little——for the men, but I hate to think of what might happen to those——out there——yards away, if a shell should drop in on them and put them on the bum. I know; I’ll send someone out there if we get a bombardment. We probably won’t, though. They say of this front that it’s held by a one-legged German on a bicycle, who runs up and down during the night shooting up rockets. Then there’s a “circus artillery,” too, which plays one-night stands at different points, and then moves on. Their yarns are good, but it must be that once in awhile the old Hun’s wife serves him his coffee cold, or something, because there are nights when he kicks up quite a respectable fuss!

*Friday, July 19th*

Today marks, I hope, an epoch in the life of the old Second Platoon. Because today, after many months of “running itself,” the outfit is at last to have an officer—and an advertising man at that! So now the Third Squad is certainly to be classed as an example of the power of advertising, with its corporal, lieutenant and captain all knights of the pen as well as the sword!

We spent most of the day cleaning ammunition—and I never dreamed that the stuff could be so filthy: dampness, mould, grease, dust—I hate to think what would happen to a gun that had nothing but that stuff to shoot Huns with!

Once more today we indulged in the Wonderful Bed (you’d laugh if you could see it! I think it probably belonged to little Fleurette, aged twelve or so, but now there are never less than two, and usually three of the little old squad intertwined on the torn canvas mattress, from which protrude various and sundry wisps of straw. Let’s

leave them there snoozing, and get that report finished up).

—And nothing else chronicle-able has occurred except the news that tomorrow night we move.

*Saturday, July 20th*

Today has been a day of checking up, gathering together the loose ends that are bound to scatter themselves about—guns, ammunition, T-bases, tools, sand-bags, personal belongings—a more motley collection you never saw! Then, too, there occurred a little incident that if it could be pictured back home, would give a thrill of pleasure to a whole lot of good-hearted Westerners. At about four o'clock I was over at Platoon Headquarters—the—— camp I spoke of. Just as I was leaving, in came Liaison Black with a huge burlap bag. "There!" he said, "*Salt Lake City Tribune* smokes, Red Cross gum and chocolate." With true soldierly impartiality the dainties were divided, down to the very last cigarette, and I went over through the crooked trench to our position, where the precious eats and smokes were once more "divvied up." Next to mail, there's nothing more welcome than "issues," as we call 'em! At dark, our limbers came up to be packed. I had to detail poor "Con" to the job of horse-leader, and he didn't like it at all! Then when they were all packed, came the hardest job of all—waiting—waiting for the relieving company to arrive. They got lost a bit, and when they showed up, the dawn was almost ready to break. That meant hustle, because transports are "*verboten*" on dangerous roads after dawn, so tired as we were, with little sleep for —— days and none at all for twelve hours, we "snapped into it," and got back into a wooded section before light. That still left us a good —— hours' hike before we got back to our "rest billets"—the same forsaken little group of cottages where we rejoined the company before we left for the "supports" early this month. This time, however, things were a lot better. We have a very comfy barn for a billet, and the hostess—she can't do enough for us! A little old woman, her ex-soldier husband, a *garçon* and a *jeune fille*, the latter perhaps twenty and *very* pretty. Neat almost to a fault, "amiable" almost to excess—she's the apple of our eye!

*Sunday, July 21st*

The first eight hours of our stay here we spent in the straw—dead to the world. But Sammy's rest is quickly taken—not so his eats. *They* require real brain effort, not to mention the expenditure of most of his salary. So we planned a feast, with plates, a table *and* a menu! I'm enclosing mine, with the signature of the participants. It was a ge-lorious *fiesta*, and by the barest luck, who should happen along but the only missing member of our quartette—Poole. So for the first time since we left the Tintah Camp, the strains of "My Honey" and "Skinimerink" went floating out on the balmy (?) evening air of France, to the astonishment of our hostesses and our own immense satisfaction!

Then we slept. Did we sleep? Oh, boy!

*Monday, July 22nd*

Do you want a nice broad grin? *Oui? Eh, bien!* What do you think was the first thing we cleaned when we came back to earth and the daily routine of wide-awake land today? Us? Nix! The limbers! We took 'em down to the stream and soused them off good and clean; then came the guns, then the pistols, and after that, those of the Sammies who were not too tired or too anxious to go to town, took a crack at themselves.

"Fran," "Con," "Spence" and I decided not to go to town until tomorrow, so when all our chores were done, we once more retired to our "downy" couch—all but one of us. "Spence," the unconquerable epicure, was not to be seen, until about six, when he came into the little kitchen which we have tacitly adopted as our living room—loaded to the gunwales with packages, and dangling before *our* eyes a bill for nearly thirty francs. We could have kissed the man.

The result was that our second banquet, though less bedecked with menus and formalities than the first, was an affair that kings and colonels might envy—with canned sausages, picture-book French pickles, jam, dates, sweet biscuits and, of course, the inevitable eggs, chips and *salade*. And the "makings" of another affair still remain,

"caché" by *Madame* until we're in the mood to feast again.

After the dinner, "Con" and I hiked down the road to R——, only to find that it is sacred to another army division, and that we are not invited there. Heigh-ho! When we went home, we found that some of the fellows had been in the place all day without a word of comment. I guess the M. P.'s don't like our faces!

*Tuesday, July 23rd*

Kids out of school! That was us today. We went off "on pass" to X——, quite a town, and our Divisional Headquarters. By running our heads off, we managed to hop onto a big U.S. Truck, thereby saving ourselves a hike; and the morning we spent in roaming the shops, the Y. M. C. A.'s and the other soldiers' foster-homes. Then we dined; and after that "continued the march" to our hearts' (and our palates') content. We met "Gib" Elliott and Corp. Schwartz, standing in the middle of whatever is French for "Main Street," "Gib" murmuring, "Gee, isn't she wonderful?" Disappearing down the street was a pretty little Y. M. C. A. girl. But after some time, we managed to convince "Gib" that he was "out o' luck," and escorted him to dinner at the *Hotel de la Gare*. (I can mention its name, because there's one in every town in France!).

When we thought of the homeward trip, almost like magic came the news that there was a bus in which one might ride luxuriously. Upon investigation at the *Gare*, we found that the bus was only for soldiers when the "*Voyageurs*" had been cared for; but we found "something just as good"—a huge green racing car, in which the mail goes to some of the villages near us. Six of us piled in where four belonged, and we whizzed home in nine minutes. The most joyous incident of our day (more joyous even than when we waved our passes at the helpless M. P.'s) was when we passed some of the other boys in our company on the road, and were accorded the punctilious salute that is given all autos, because they're so costly there *must* be an officer inside!



Wednesday, July 24th

We spent the morning in our regular round of machine gun instruction (by the way, ere I get myself entangled in a miz-maze of errors, I'm going to explain why they're liable to occur. At the table here, there is "Fran," who is writing, talking, singing; "Spen," writing and asking for suggestions; "Scout" Kearns, writing and continually interrupting himself for one reason or another; outside, the regular bench-load of rumor-gatherers is at its evening pastime; in the road is a column of infantry passing, every third rank or so being possessed of a noisy or at least a conversational doughboy—and their comments, too, are floating in on the evening air. To add to all that, Hughes and Higgins have just come in, to see if they can pick up a card game to christen a new deck. In the next room, the *jeune fille* and her mother are talking; and I, poor helpless wool-gathering male, am trying to write! With which *apologia pro nobis*, I continue, and then, in the afternoon, we did something new! A long walk through roads, fields and little paths brought us to a place where there were two or three lines of trenches, and a line of emplacements. The ground before us was all pitted with rough, jagged holes that overlapped and intermingled, and looked like a No Man's Land for fair. Here we were instructed in a gentle little nihilistic art of bomb throwing—first with round stones, and later with the real article. I struck my hand against the side of the trench and dropped my first stone. "Uncle Peter," I thought "there may be sermons in stones, but you can thank your stars there's no powder in 'em!" However, my real bombs blew up successfully, at the proper time and place. One stands in the trench, grasps the bomb in one hand, strikes the cap against some hard surface and then throws it "over the top," and as near as possible to some unwary *Boche*. Five seconds later there is a heavy boom!—a column of smoke and dirt!—and Mr. Bomb's life-work is finished. Expert bombers hold them after striking the cap until a second or two have elapsed; but we swatted them and heaved them over without any great lapse of time!



Today Lieut. Peabody broached to me the subject of a show. As usual, I got enthusiastic and offered to work, so the evening was spent in writing, humming and trying out ditties, picking casts and trying to figure out how to give a show, *sans* stage, *sans* script, and even *sans* time for rehearsal! Even poor old "Shaky" himself didn't have such a problem as *that* wished on him! But at any rate, we have a good idea. The scene is to show a camp kitchen and a picket line, and the characters will be selected from the company curios which seem somehow as a general rule to gravitate either into the kitchen or the stables of a military outfit. The rest of the show is worked around that—and then we're planning a little olio of specialties—tumbling, singing, and another one of "Lovely" Clubley's female impersonations. I hope it'll go off right, but time sure is short!

#### *Thursday, July 25th*

We went out to the range for the day, to fire some more of the prehistoric ammunition with which we've been burdened. The lumbering old mess-kitchen followed us out and we lunched out in the fields, with a panorama of hills, fields and little red specks of towns all around us. The "theatrical men" (yes, the captain did grin a little when he announced it) were allowed to shoot early, so we got a little chance to rehearse. Things today have progressed to the hopeless state of utter confusion that I know presages a fine performance! We're going to have a "horse" on the picket line, composed of two men and a few dozen sandbags; and he in himself is an undertaking. Then there are the characters to be trained, costumed and taught their cues, and the songs to be fixed up. For the first time in weeks, I feel busy—hence happy!

#### *Friday, July 26th*

We trekked to the range again today, but thanks to the wisdom of some of the roaming members of our company we went this time by a short-cut across the fields and over stepping-stones, thereby saving kilos, tempers and Government shoe-leather—incidentally some forty minutes of time. Once more the Thespians were honored, and when

we got back, held our dress rehearsal—without the piano, however. That necessary instrument came wandering in just before show-time—borrowed from the Salvation Army hut in a neighboring town. When we got it in place, we boldly conducted a rehearsal, with nothing between us and our gathering audience except a curtain made out of fifteen or sixteen shelter-halves buttoned together!

I've sent you a rough programme of the show, and a copy of the ditties. I hope to send you a more presentable copy, which is not yet quite ready. Suffice it to say, though, that the show was a success! "Con," as Sprague, was a marvel, and the other fellows all made hits. The most tickled, of course, were the folks in the audience who were "ragged"—and we saw to it that there were lots of those!

"Fran" and I were so wearied from the effects of our two-night impresarial efforts, that we retired pretty early, to dream of everything in the world but war!

*Saturday, July 27th*

As I have perhaps said before, a corporal's is the hardest, meanest and least appreciated job in the army. He gets all the responsibility, all the blame and all the work—he's like a fat man—nobody loves him. (Gosh—wouldn't it be awful to be a fat corporal?—but then, such a condition couldn't exist—the worry of the job would wear down a hippo to skin and bone inside of a week!). All of which is apropos of my morning's job—checking up on the equipment of my squad—seeing that "Scout" Kearns gets the spoon he's lacked for a month, and that Fox has enough shoelaces, and that "Hig," who has gobbled up his "iron rations," is supplied with new ones. Oh, it's sweet—this job! When I get back to hiring printers and things again, I'm going to put in my ad "National Army Ex-Corporals, 10% extra pay." They'll be worth it, after the experience they're getting over here. This afternoon we went to the erstwhile Forbidden City—now as free as air, and crowded with our boys—and found it by far the most attractive little town we've struck. It was in German hands for three weeks early in the war, and was quite a bit shot up at the time, but it has been for the most part rebuilt, and

seems more "alive-and-kicking" than any place we've been in. There are three or four factories with smoke coming out of their chimneys, and the stores have all kinds of things in them—sufficient, in fact, to make us all gloriously "broke." The Y. M. C. A. canteen is very well supplied, and we went out with chocolate, biscuits and peaches stuffing our pockets to the bursting point. Cheese, nuts and other goodies from the *épiceries* and *boulangeries* nearby made the prospect even more pleasing—and when we got home, Mlle. Louise had found eggs, so we feasted again, 'most as well as one could wish to back home! I'll bet the letters that were scribbled on this table tonight were the rosiest that have come out of our four Watermans in some time! I know mine were! Then along came the papers, with news of big doings at the noisy Big Front—and we all retired with visions of a great big transport, tying up to a Hoboken dock, at some earlier date than 1942. However, *nous verrons ce que nous verrons—n'est ce pas?*

*Sunday, July 28th*

Apropos of nothing, this morning we asked our host (who returns on foot each week-end from the neighboring town where he works) if there was any place in the vicinity where baths were to be had. After a lengthy conference in speed-limit colloquial French, *Monsieur* turned from the rest of the family and drew us a map—and the cavalcade was soon under way—"Fran," "Spen," "Con" and I, all with our raincoats bulging with towels, clean clothes and soap, splashing through the puddles on our way to town—we must have been a funny sight!

Following instructions, we turned to the left and then to the right, crossed the little bridge and found at last the little house we were seeking—most properly labeled "*Bains*." We entered, waited while *Madame* prepared the rooms, and then were ushered into the most desirable spot in all France, to our eyes at least! The most gigantic, ee-enormous porcelain tubs I ever saw, just chock-full of steaming water! "Con" and I smiled, first out of pure joy—and second, a broader one, as we thought of the humor of it—that a bath should ever be classed as a luxury!

I honestly believe, though, that if the four of us had been offered our choice of grand opera tickets or bath tickets, the four of us would have voted as a unit for the dip!

As we paraded our cleanliness down the main street a few minutes later, we picked up Clubley, Schmitt and Swinnerton, who were hot in pursuit of a meal. We joined forces, and sought out a little haunt presided over by two very charming Frenchwomen, and their fascinating woolly dog, *Mouton*. We ate a most disgraceful number of *oeufs* and *pommes de terre* and then had the indecent audacity to wait while *Madame* cooked more!

Of course, we had to be tempted by the cheeses, the biscuits, the nuts and other dainties that smiled at us through the shop windows. So we came back to camp just about "broke" once more. I think I've called your attention to the inexplicably accurate knowledge of our needs that the U. S. Mail seems to possess. We arrived home in imminent danger of spending a dull evening, and behold! There, waiting for me, were newspapers, a *Red Book*, *Every Week* and *Life*—enough for all of us. Hence, we spent the rest of the evening in the pursuit of letters—a pastime in which we have had little enough practice during the last few months. After that, I indulged in another letter-writing party, and went to bed quite late. Rumors about our next move are plentiful—although, of course, most of them are ridiculous. However, with all these stories, the truth must lie *somewhere*.

*Monday, July 29th*

My ears are ringing merrily tonight—and when I whistle, it has a funny "edge" on it that is more familiar than it once was. That's what comes of spending the day kneeling by the side of a Hotchkiss while it spits bullets at a target. Today was an "off day" for my gun—it acquired all sorts of ailments, and finally was condemned as a menace to society; that means that I'll get a nice new gun, all sweet and greasy—full of sand, caked oil and grit. That means a gun-cleaning party—how "Foxy" and the "Scout," "Con," "Hig" and Hughes will enjoy that!

We lost our old belts this morning—the dear old infantry belts, in whose ample cartridge-pockets, from time immemorial, the boys have kept their treasures. Where will they now keep their Bull Durham, matches, chocolate, cigarettes and knick-knacks? Goodness knows; certainly there's no place for 'em in these natty, spic-and-span revolver belts. Oh, well—they were good friends while we had 'em!

This evening has been eventless, except for a most unexpected windfall—a postal army check for five dollars from the P&L Benevolent Association! Once more the all-seeing eye of Postmaster-General Burleson must have been looking at me as I fingered my last half franc and wondered how the squad and I were going to get through the month on that! Thanks to that, and a timely loan from Lieut. Ethridge, I was enabled to send two of my boys to town a little better than broke, anyhow!

*Tuesday, July 30th*

A day of smiles and sighs. We spent the morning in physical exercises, close-order drill and gas-mask drill, and you'd laugh to see the fellows, after all these months, executing "Right-face!", "Hand-s'lute!" and the rest of the school of the soldier in the middle of an unfrequented road in France! We weren't so very bad, at that!

After lunch we studied the Hotchkiss, and laughed our heads off over a new list of names that has just been given us—the third list of parts we've memorized thus far. That was laugh number two.

Then a providential ball-game made the afternoon a quarter holiday, and "Fran" and I hiked off to the town, going this time by a new route, over the little funny bridge and down through the factory section. As we drew near the center of town, I spotted a sign that started me off hot-foot across the street. That sign read "*Imprimerie.*" A disciple of Poor Richard hidden here among all these followers of Mars!

I stepped down two stone steps, walked across what had evidently once been a concrete floor, but which no longer had any covering, the bent and twisted ironwork showing where a skylight had once been. Passing on, I came into



the shop—a fine, light little room, boasting one cylinder press and a jobber, and so spic-and-span in its neatness that one almost hesitated to enter.

*Monsieur*, in his long black coat-apron, and with his heavy brown beard, looked more like a research chemist than a typo, but soon I found that he was just as much a good fellow as the knights of the composing stick back in old New York.

After a little talk, he began to tell his story, and to my intense surprise, I found that he had spent thirty-three months in service, and had then been retired only when a wound in the head and the loss of his right foot had rendered him unfit for further service. He had fought in my Silent City when it rang with the shouts of the maddened and the cries of the dying. He had held the very factory where I picked up my bits of crockery. There his captain and sixteen of his comrades had fallen, but he with others held on, and in the end won out.

That was early in the war. For thirty months after that he fought on—and then came “the shell with his name on it”—the hospital—the long convalescence, and finally the return to his little shop—what was left of it. The Huns had burned it to the ground when they spent their ghoulish three weeks in the town, away back in the gray, early days of the war. With his own hands he raised a roof over the ruins, painted it, finished it up, borrowed the funds to buy his small equipment, and once more started out in life—but this time there are no boys at his presses, no men at his type-cases. He’s alone—and in his loneliness made me think of *If*—

“Or see the things you gave your life to, broken,  
And stoop, and build them up with worn-out tools.”

And he smiles! That’s the French of it. I can understand now what I found it so difficult to grasp before I came over—how France has been able to keep her head while the demon has been tearing at her very throat. It’s because that priceless temperament makes her smile—smile, yes, even when the end seems to have come. That’s France!

Wednesday, July 31st

Birthdays out here aren't so very different from any other day, it seems. It felt good, though, when Clubley came up and clapped me on the back to offer me the compliments of the day. He happened to know.

Soon after breakfast I started over to the town in which our battalion headquarters are located—and where, incidentally, all our medical service is obtained. It seems like a long trip for fly-bite ointment—but French flies are different! It was a beautiful walk through the woods, and you can't imagine the shock of seeing all of a sudden on a tree, the sign "*Zone Dangereuse*"—indicating that from that point on, things might happen. Not that anything *did*—on the contrary, the country-folk go on plowing and reaping, in blithe disregard of the fact that gas shells, bombs and great *obus* can be showered on their heads, if the Hun feels so inclined—and from the appearance of the smiling countryside, it's very seldom that he *does* feel the spirit moving him.

I got my ointment, visited the Y. M. C. A., dropped in at headquarters, to find my friend Nolan just as usual, behind his old typewriter; pumped him dry of rumors about payday, our new destination, new mail, and all the other things the "boys" perennially want to know about. Nolan didn't know a great deal, but thanks to some others around the office, I gathered up enough rumors to pay my admission back into camp, at least! Then I stepped for a moment into the Salvation Army hut, presided over by an American girl perhaps thirty-five years old, with lots of charm, and a neat Southern accent. Every time I go into a Salvation Army shack, I'm impressed with the fact that they've gotten very close indeed to the men and their needs—and back in the States, they're not getting one tenth the credit they deserve! I got home in time for mess, and then went through a few formations—machine gun study, gas drill and the rest. "Fran" and I walked down to town and bought a few things to eat (which we found no difficulty in getting rid of!), after which the evening again became a literary one, followed by a very early retirement.

*Thursday, August 1st*

The morning formations were speeded up a bit today, so that we could all go over after mess to a neighboring camp, there to undergo one more new military experience—the process of being “de-loused.” Your Sammy goes to the de-lousing station as the farmer went to his Saturday bath—“whether he needed it or not”—and it isn’t such a fearsome process at that! You arrive at the building, and immediately three luckless, poor fellows of your bunch are detailed to chop firewood, and some others to pump water. Then you all undress, tie up your clothing in a bundle, throw it to the attendant, and pass on like Diana, to the bath. The bath consists of a one-minute trickle of hot water, followed by a two-minute trickle of cold. Much refreshed, you pass on to the next room, where you stand in line to claim your clothing. Eventually it comes back to you, de-loused, it is true, but oh—steaming, damp, smelling like a Chinese laundry, and wrinkled—oh! boy! criss-cross creases, folds many and manifold—such a mess you never saw! Then some lucky ones “traded in” old coats and trousers for new ones, and the day’s work was done.

We broke up into groups on the way home, and soon started experimenting with the route. As different groups disagreed, the groups got smaller, and soon I found myself quite as lost as I’ve ever been, and with only two companions. While we discussed whether this or that was north, far off in the distance I saw two horsemen, in whom I recognized our captain and Lieut. Ethridge. We scrambled through the underbrush and reached their little road, and Sherlocked our way home following their horses’ hoof-prints. And we got there in less time than the right road requires. Speaking of luck—

After we had eaten our mess, we spent the rest of the evening in thrashing out the rumors of the day—“The officers’ baggage is labeled (Italy) (Paris) (United States)” according to which rumorist you follow: “We’re going to (Chateau Thierry) (Italy) (Russia) (Albania) (Ukraine) (U. S. A.) (Philippine Islands)”—and half a dozen more: “We’re going to be paid in American money.” “We’re

going to turn in our gas-masks and helmets." "We're going to have a pleasant surprise." "We're going to a seaport to study a new gun," and dozens more of the same. Perhaps the censor will censoriously censor the above—but if a Hun can get any information from our rumors, he's cleverer than we are! I wouldn't be surprised to see us go right up to some new front a few miles from where we are now—but there's no telling. Here in the war zone, where all other feminine creatures are *verboten*, Dame Rumor holds full sway!

### *Friday, August 2nd*

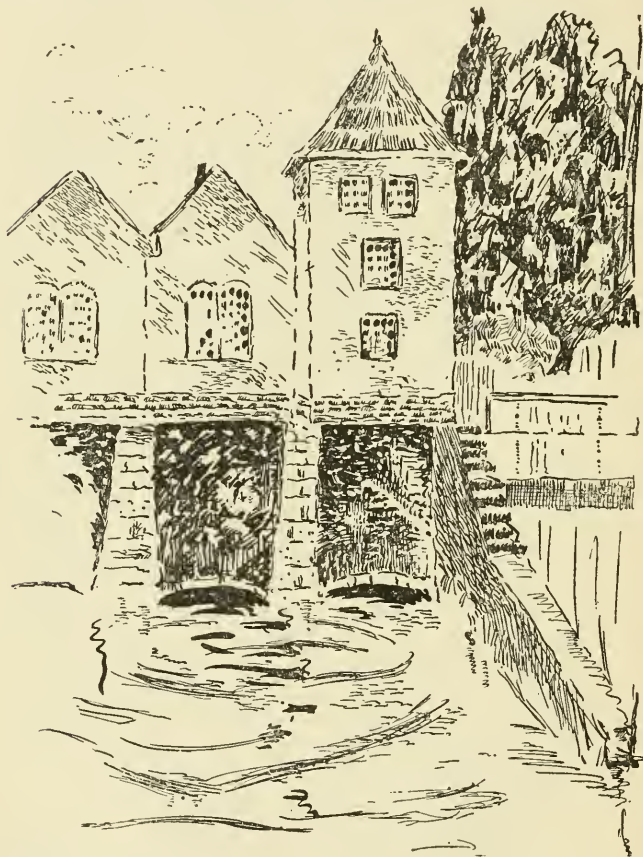
Today's story can be briefly told—a day at the range is much the same whenever one indulges in it—except that today, with our new gun, we didn't have a single stoppage! Tonight we have drawn rations and gathered a new crop of gossip—and tomorrow, some time, we move!

### *Saturday, August 3rd*

After our regular Saturday morning inspection, we packed up the limbers, which glistened most beautifully in their new coats of O. D. paint—then hied us back to the billets, there to be greeted with the joyful news of imminent pay!—and Corp. "Pete," for the first time in months, about to be the gainer by the monthly financial adjustment that takes place after "pay-call" has sounded. N. B.—We got francs, not dollars! Of course, in such a financially overloaded condition, with a journey of delightful indefiniteness ahead of us, nothing would do but that "Fran," "Spen" and I must go to town. We did—and came back with jam, cakes, and oh, uncounted and unlooked-for joy!—fresh tomatoes to put in our salad! The supper was a feast indeed—the hike then started.

The first night's destination was a cinch—merely a two-and-a-half-mile jaunt up the road and across the river, to the outskirts of a little town which should be greatly complimented at being considered large enough to have outskirts at all! We pitched tents—and about eight seconds after our ninth and last tent-peg went in, came the deluge! It rained in torrents—the flashes that we had taken for artillery turned out to be lightning, and it was certainly

a test of the li'l old tents. Ours stood, and at last reports (when my snooze became a full-grown snore) was still keeping the rain off our noses, toeses and clotheses!



*Sunday, August 4th*

We rose fairly early, and wandered off toward "town"—(we always call it "town" if it boasts a *café*, a church and an *épicerie*). "Con" went to church, while I continued to do the sights. After a look at the main street, I decided



to return to my first love, a paper factory built directly over our friend the stream, and run by its power. It boasted a mill-race, a very picturesque tower, and a little bridge on which "yours truly" ensconced himself to indulge in a lonely reverie. That's a little sketch of it, as it looked from my vantage point on the edge of the bridge. As Kipling persists in saying, "It was really much prettier than this picture, but my editor won't let me use colors."

In the afternoon, we hiked over to a neighboring town, to dine. But because we had to get back to camp by six, and the "hour of serving meals" doesn't come until five-thirty, we had to indulge in a little *camouflage* to dodge the much-feared-by-the-natives "*Police Français*."

Instead of dining in the restaurant, we mounted into our hostess' hay-loft, and there, on an improvised table, we dined sumptuously, our banquet including half of a cake!—for which we paid nine francs!! Thus does one pay the piper in a sugarless land. When we got back to camp, marching orders had not yet come, so we amused ourselves admiring the very beautiful scenery—the island formed where river meets canal—and in watching the antics of a Frenchman who was fishing in a rather unique manner, quite effective, and absolutely contrary to law, and therefore, like most crime, exciting. He would draw from his pockets several bombs, and throw them in the stream, and after the explosion, countless small boys would swarm out through the water to capture the stunned fish.

From this sport we were called to sling packs and hike, this time in a new formation. Instead of marching in regular column, we grouped ourselves around and behind our gun carts, each squad with its own gun. The result was that when our horse walked, we walked; but when he galloped to catch up with the procession, we and our packs had to run! To add to the joys of the night, it poured rain not once but three times, and a company in front of us led us several kilos astray. This was one of the longest, about the hardest, and quite the most disagreeable hike we've yet experienced, and when, at about one-thirty A. M., we landed in the ruined town of X——, we were

fagged out. Imagine our joy when we found ourselves billeted for the night in a huge barn, its hay-loft floor covered with about three feet of clean, new straw!

*Monday, August 5th*

Not for many a long month have I slept until eleven o'clock—but this time I did—and I didn't begrudge my lost breakfast, I can tell you! Just down the street from our billet was the church—what was left of it. We entered the door, and looked on a scene of ruin as complete as any I've yet beheld—broken images lying on the grass-grown earth in a hopeless tangle of splintered wood, discolored chips of marble and shattered tile. As we continued on past the altar to the anteroom, a sign, roughly scrawled by some American soldier, caught my eye. "Don't write your name on this wall. This is the house of GOD." As we went out, something made me look toward what had been the altar, and instinctively I bowed my head.

All of a sudden, the word came round that we were to leave at two-thirty in the afternoon instead of after dark, and that our destination had been changed. The news proved true, and three o'clock found us once more on the broad highway, dragging one tired foot after the other, and running along behind our little cart whenever our raw-boned old nag chose to catch up a bit. By nine o'clock we were once more encamped in a field, some ten kilos from our final destination. In telling you of our hikes, I fear that perhaps I don't convey exactly the correct picture. Here it is in a bit more graphic form; in the last twenty-four hours we have, in effect, hiked from South Orange to New York *and back*, every man carrying on his back a pack that weighs upwards of eighty pounds!

*Tuesday, August 6th*

At six next morning we were awakened, to roll our packs and complete the journey to our entraining point. When we got within a kilo of the town, off we switched into the woods and pitched tents again!

At about noon, word came that we might go in and see the town. It's not a very big place, but you've heard of it. Except for a dam across the river and a large building

that have been bombed by enemy planes, the war has not affected it at all, but, of course, the streets are full of soldiers and the stores with tempting things for the "*militaire*." But in all that town there was only one thing for us. There in a little shop on the square, was a sign "Ice Cream." Outside and in, a khaki-clad mob of officers and men were demanding an entrance. After waiting an hour, and expending a franc, we were awarded a spoonful of raspberry ice! We questioned a kindly French officer as to where one might "*manger bien*." He led us across the street and pointed out a little restaurant a few doors down the nearest side-street. Although it was not yet the hour, we went in, hoping to arrange a little dinner. But it was not to be. *Madame* came up to us—"Non, non, rien!" I looked at her, and soon discovered why. Her gown was black, but then, most of them are. Her face told the story—her face and the dozen newly written, black-bordered letters in her hand. The world is acclaiming a great Allied victory—and here in a little French town, a woman pays its cost.

We dined, as one does, by visiting first the butcher, then the *épicerie* and then the *restaurateur*—but we dined well, nevertheless.

Then the crowd rambled back to camp, through the streets of the town, stopping on the way to visit the really beautiful old church, and to buy a supply of maps in a nearby shop. That's one of the prime amusements of a trip, you know, to read the names on the railroad stations, and by this means trace our route. Each junction is the signal for great excitement and "Are we going to the left or right?" is the question of the hour.

*Wednesday, August 7th*


At about two o'clock we broke camp, rolled our packs by candle-light and got ready to move. It was certainly a picture to see the lights flickering all through the wood, and the black figures here and there. A short hike took us to the station, and then came the job of loading in the dark—G. S. wagon, limbers, kitchen, gun-carts and men. This time our quarters were very close indeed—twenty-four men (*and* packs!) in one of the funny little freight cars

that we use over here. On the platform under a tarpaulin, in the pitch-black darkness, were two Y. M. C. A. girls serving cocoa, and two men selling cigarettes, chocolate and cigars. That's the kind of service the boys appreciate!

At about four we went to sleep, and some time while we were in the land of dreams the cavalcade, for all the world like a circus train, moved off.

All day we moved, studied maps and slept, and admired the scenery—particularly the signs that one sees everywhere of the bountiful harvest that the soldiers and their families are gathering this year.

At one point on our journey we went through a section of country which at one time was the scene of considerable fighting. The whole countryside is dotted with crosses—here a single one, there a group—some along the roadside, others in the midst of wheatfields and gardens, but all carefully fenced and tended. Far off on the hillside you can see them, silhouetted against the sky, for miles around—a perpetual monument to War and Hate.

When it got too dark to see plainly, we once more resumed our sardine arrangement, like this:  and we visited a very bumpy, flat-wheeled sort of dreamland, until suddenly at some unearthly hour of the early morning, we were awakened and sent up to the front of the train to roll our wagons off the flat-cars, unload our horses and supplies—then back to the car to fix up our packs. Many were the things unprintable that were said about the army, the war, and most important because most imminent—the coming hike. We tightened up our straps and swore—tied on our overcoats and swore—climbed out of the cars and swore some more. Then happened the Most Remarkable Hike in History (it deserves all the capitals I can award it)! We did "Squads right," marched down the platform to the end of our train, across the tracks, and *into a barrack!* *Mirabile dictu*, and also Holy Cat! It was so wonderful that the crowding, the dirt floor and the dampness were completely ignored!

*Thursday, August 8th*

This morning we found ourselves in a little town—I can't tell you where, but it doesn't much matter anyhow,

because no one seems to know why we're here or how long we'll be here. Suffice it that I've shaved, eaten a most enormous dinner, thanks once more to the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker, and that I'm now in an orchard under an apple-tree, alternately writing and watching the trains go by. I suspect, though, that when I go back to the barracks now, I'll find some new news to keep us on the *qui vive* once more.

—But no news appeared, so after a quiet, eventless evening, we went to bed.

*Friday, August 9th*

Next morning—we cleaned up our gun equipment, which, thanks to the precautionary oil-bath we gave it, was in very good shape. We did have to indulge in a few quiet grins at the expense of the less provident, whose guns required every sort of first-aid, from kerosene to emery-paper. You can bet that our little Hotchkiss got another oil-bath before we left her! In the afternoon we started out in search of our customary feast. But somehow, things weren't right; the farmers had sold all their eggs, the butcher was closed, the *épicerie* cleaned out, and nobody had any potatoes, raw or cooked, to sell. To cap the climax, the baker, who yesterday sold us a bit of bread for a few sous and a wise wink in lieu of a bread-card, was away today, and his little daughter was quite obdurate.

As a sort of last resort, I asked a woman standing by, if there wasn't *some* place where we might eat. She smiled, and led us around the corner, behind the church, up an alley, in a side door, through a dark passage, up a crooked stair, through a second tunnel, and at last, into her two-room home, where we dined—on luscious new potatoes, cider, three kinds of canned fish, *and!*—I braved the tortuous passages, visited the baker's daughter once more, and found there a *poilu* buying bread for his chickens at home. Between us we persuaded her that the section of loaf that she had left after selling him his exact two hundred grammes was not much use to her—so we got our bread, too!

When we got back to camp, the news we've been awaiting was there—tomorrow our gun teams with their equipment,



depart in motor-trucks for that well-known place, Somewhere Else.

*Saturday, August 10th*

Our little cart was emptied of its equipment—the ammunition cleaned, and we were just preparing to have our coffee, hardtack and “corned-woolly,” when suddenly the order came through, “Pack limbers again and be ready to leave immediately—the trucks aren’t coming!” This proved to be only partly true. The trucks came to a point within a half-a-mile of us, but didn’t care, I imagine, to negotiate a rather cranky hill. We drove to the top of the hill, and there loaded the equipment on the trucks, tumbling in ourselves on top of a nondescript mass of guns, ammunition and packs. Then began one wonderful twelve hours—wonderful in spite of the fact that during the course of it, we neither ate nor slept.

As we lumbered on, we entered a section of country that has recently been evacuated by the enemy. This made the scenes remarkably different from those of the stagnant, crystallized front we left. Everywhere were signs of the struggle—the roads alone, as always, have been rebuilt and were nearly perfect. As for the rest—chaos! Piles of rubbish hurriedly thrown together—houses a mass of stone, slate, tile and freshly-splintered timber. Here a bridge blown up—there a huge shell-hole on the railroad, the bent and twisted ends of the rails vividly illustrating the force of the explosion. On every side, shell-holes—shell-holes—shell-holes. The roadsides, the houses, the broad grainfields are all dotted with them. One wonders how life could have existed in the midst of all that—but it did—and for many it must have been a triumphant crisis of life, too! The enemy’s need of certain materials is shown by the fact that every telegraph and telephone pole in this section had been carefully stripped of its wires, and also by the great junk-piles where other metals had been assembled, preparatory to being loaded and shipped back to Germany.

Some of the towns we drove through were quite wealthy, with fine homes and public buildings, costly villas and beautifully-planned streets—but such wreckage you never

saw! Gaping holes in the stone and brick walls, giving glimpses into the looted remains of these once palatial rooms. Whenever he had time the Hun tarried to destroy! It was only when he was too sorely pressed for time that he left things of value unharmed.

At about dark we became pretty drowsy, and several of the boys dropped off to sleep, although the road was bumpy, the truck a rough-rider, and the men's positions about as ludicrous as could be imagined—so only a few of us saw the towns we went through after dark. Just before midnight we entered another city (you can't imagine the struggle I have in writing this story without mentioning places! All these towns are by-words to you—and yet I can't "place myself" for you by telling you which of the hundreds of "war-towns" I'm talking about)—quite as battered as the rest. A short distance beyond the town limits we stopped, and in the pitch-black darkness unloaded our equipment. We carried it into a wooden shack nearby, and I smiled as I looked suddenly up through a ten-foot shell-hole in its roof at the wise old stars that see all of this organized villainy, and wonder at the folly of "civilized" man. Our lieutenant led us over to a nearby wood, where we "fopped" for the night, right on the ground.

### *Sunday, August 11th*

We awoke about eight o'clock, to a day of continual surprises. First, as we looked up at the trees, we found that they were literally torn to pieces—splintered trunks lying here and there, dead branches hanging everywhere. Within two feet of our heads we found half a dozen boxes, each containing three live three-inch German shells. As we walked down the twenty yards of railroad track to the spot where Melidones was handing out the perpetual coffee, "corned woolly" and tack, we passed a German machine gun emplacement literally buried in spent shells. Those boys didn't cut and run—they stuck! Their ammunition, while perfectly serviceable, shows that they are facing a shortage of metals. Some of the shell-cases are of brass, and others of a rather poor grade of copper. The bullets themselves, instead of being of solid nickel like

ours, are of hollow brass, filled with some dark metal—lead, perhaps.

Our camp is at the junction of two broad highways, and just on the other side of the road is a great supply terminal, with probably twenty lines of railway track, platforms and switches. East and west of these tracks are wooden supply huts. Have you ever noticed photos of cyclone-stricken towns? That's the condition of those huts—many of them looking as though a giant had puffed at them—some nothing but a bullet-riddled mass of planks.

On all sides, as far as the eye can see, are piles of ammunition—large and small shells, some burnt up, and others live—everything from two-inch "babies" up to ten-inch "Berthas." Of course, during the days that have elapsed since my birthday, when most of the rumpus here took place, much of the valuable material has been taken away,—but what is left is a sight indeed!

We went down the road a few hundred yards, following up a "tip"—to a group of wrecked barracks that had been occupied by German officers. In one of them we found what we sought—a myriad of bottles of precious mineral water—the finest you could imagine. A dozen or so of us went down and brought up crates of it to the camp. There were some funny sights, too—men washing and shaving in a cupful of the precious stuff! "Con" cutting my hair, with his razor and scissors in one hand and a green bottle of mineral water in the other! The district is rehabilitating itself quite quickly—the dead have practically all been buried (although we did see one dead German, and a horse, which had been overlooked by the Pioneers—that organization whose chief job is to police up the battlefields of France)—the French are transporting the abandoned ammunition in lorries, and getting such order as they can. Yesterday as we came through the towns that have been repatriated, we saw on all sides the signs of reconstruction; scrawled on the doors of many half ruined houses were the words "*habité*" or "*propriétaire rentré*." Out in the fields were the peasants so lately refugees, cutting down the grain, a little over-ripe, but still of great value—many of them armed only with a sickle—carefully working

around the huge shell-holes, and cheerfully ignoring the many "dud" shells which may be exploded by the merest touch. But to come back to the sights of today. A mere chronicle couldn't cover them all—the wrecked planes, the German rifles and other equipment, including much that was brand new—helmets, belts, ammunition-boxes and other things—a whole building full of huge beer-kegs (unfortunately empty!) a dump perhaps fifty yards square, full of new boxes of hand-grenades, of the "potato-masher" type; the graves of Willy Schneider and another "Heinie" whose name I forget, who died on my birthday—I could keep it up for pages!

Another "tip" furnished me with a German stretcher, which I purloined from a devastated shack. I'm lying on it now, and for desk I'm using a Hun ammunition box. Beside me are several bottles of this delicious drinking water of theirs—so you see, we're quite indebted to the *Boche* just now!

As I write, every once in a while there's a heavy explosion. That's from the mines which the Germans sowed all through this region, but had no time to explode. The Pioneers are ferreting them out and making them harmless—a job I wouldn't relish a great deal.

I'm enclosing a pipeful of the kind of tobacco that is being issued to the German soldiers now. Try it out. As far as we can see, they might just as well gather it up off the ground, because it's nothing but dried leaves!

Several things have impressed me since we got here—first, that this is open, and therefore American warfare—(since we entered this district, we've hardly seen a trench!) second, that while the Germans undoubtedly lack certain things, their army is far from being ill-equipped. Such of their material as we have picked up hereabouts, with the exceptions I have mentioned, is of very good quality, and admirably designed. Evidently the people are sacrificing every sort of necessity in order that the equipment of the army may be kept up to standard. Oh!—in the multiplicity of things to tell, I forgot to say that in the debris of the mineral-water shack, I found a piano, and viciously banged out "Liberty Bell" on it and all the other patriotic

ditties I could think of! Also, that in the same shack, there was a very beautiful buffet, of black walnut, exquisitely carved, the design including the date 1812—crated, ready no doubt, to be sent by some Prussian officer as a souvenir for his wife. She'll never get it now!

*Monday, August 12th*

After our regular round of morning duties—washing, shaving, cleaning guns and pistols—we lazed till noon; then after mess, we decided to hike down to the nearest town, to seek out the Y. M. C. A. After a considerable walk through the devastated streets of the city, we at last discovered the place, located in what had been a German *fliegerkeller* (whatever that may be!). And after “Con” and I had stood there for an endless while, we managed to buy two cigars and two packages of (forgive me!) “Spear-mint” each. I gave him my cigars for his spearmint, and then, still in search of the elusive protein, we walked up to the main square—where all the results of centuries of beauty-cultivation—the huge bay-trees and shrubbery—were destroyed in a single night. Across the square was a great white residence, palatial in size and beauty, but marred by innumerable bullet-holes, and by a fifteen-foot shell-hole torn in its side. There, in the window was a pile of sardine-cans, and behind them a smiling *poilu*—the inevitable sign of a French canteen. They were all but sold out, so we contented ourselves with sardines and started home for mess. On the way I met my old infantry sergeant, and learned through him where the old company was quartered. After mess, I rambled through the woods until at last I found them—then in their midst once more found Warren Case. It's funny to run across the “Corp” this way, every once in a while. We went to my tent, and talked over old times, and told our experiences. They had a harder time than we, and lost several men.

When Warren left it was bed-time, so after re-adjusting my war-map in agreement with the latest newspaper, I adjourned to the couch.

*Tuesday, August 13th*

As we move this afternoon, we loafed all morning, and part of the time slept. At about three, the transport of



our company drove up, footsore, weary and hungry—but there was to be no rest for them. We loaded our guns and equipment on the dusty little carts, and tied on the 'huge box of extra ammunition as best we could. Our work was just finished, when suddenly someone clapped me on the back. I turned, to face Gene Cathroll! Behind him was the cannonette he's driving—a little trucklet that takes Y. M. C. A. supplies up to the front-line trenches. He's attached to our division, with headquarters in this town, and with him is his side-kick Gano, engaged in the same work. When I left him, we started on a short, uneventful hike, which landed us in a wood somewhat nearer the front. As it was clear, we just bunked on the ground.

*Wednesday, August 14th*

We're getting up to the front, all right! Last night the old artillery was booming all around us, and the *Boche* were answering, too. One Allied monster—probably a naval gun—is quite near us, and cut into our slumber to beat the band! We had one gas alarm during the night, but there was little if any gas near us.

After seeing Warren and Cathroll, I figured I'd see a third old friend soon—and I did. Before breakfast this morning I was ambling down the road through the woods, when there loomed up before me a limping, dusty, worn-out figure in the uniform of a second lieutenant. It was Asbury—my old friend "Raz," who I told you some time ago had gotten his commission. He's been leading a battalion of doughboys all over this part of France, and is nearly fagged out. He came up to breakfast with us, and is coming back later. He's the same old "Raz," and I wish he were back with us.

As I write, there are a dozen or so planes, some *Boche* and some Allied, right over our heads. They are indulging in some of the most surprising gyrations—nose-dives and every other sort of thing—but thanks to our noisy night, I'm going to sleep right within sight of an exhibition that would draw a crowd of fifty thousand back in the States—and so it goes!

(*Later*) We started on the eventful journey very calmly (more or less, I thought later, like the Babes in the

Woods!). As the lines drew nearer, we strung out in a long line, single file behind our gun carts, with about fifty yards between each two men. We could see the red flashes of the Allied artillery, and hear the occasional burst of a *Boche* shell, but it was all more or less distant—impersonal; the fact that our cart was overloaded and tumbledly worried us far more than shells!

The winding road at last brought us within a short distance of a wood. Here our transport stopped, and we set about unfastening the straps and ropes that held our load together. Suddenly the sky was made brilliant by German star-shells, and there was our transport, in a long black silhouette, outlined against the sky! When darkness came again, we loaded on our backs all we could carry, and with the lieutenant started for our position.

Swish! Crash! In we stumbled, slipping and sliding over branches, scrub, piles of old equipment and tangles of vines and bushes. We deposited our first load and then went back for the rest, leaving the lieutenant and two men behind.

Then we struck it! Whether “Jerry” saw our transport, or was shelling the road, the wood or something else, we’ll never know. It’s enough that, intentionally or not, he shelled us! It was a real artillery *barrage*—shells raining all around us—the constant “Whang! Whang!” as they struck the ground accompanied by the buzz-saw whirl of flying bits of shell. Flat into shell-holes we ducked, making our way through shell-bursts and between them, toward the rear of the field, where the *barrage* seemed less dense. One 77 crashed into the earth just two feet from me, with a noise that I’ll never forget! If I’d been ten feet away I’d probably be clubbing around with Napoleon and Caesar by now—but at two feet, the whole mess goes right over you! I guess my rabbit’s foot was working for me that time, all right! When we got back to the road, “Jerry” started dropping gas shells. “Thud, Thud!” into the earth they go, with no explosion whatever. These we dreaded hardly at all, as our masks gave us full protection.

At last the affair was ended, and we went back to the road, gathered up the rest of our belongings, and made for

our new "home," to be greeted by our lieutenant—who was, of course, certain that his flock had all gone to glory. But God was certainly with us, because out of the whole thirteen of us there wasn't so much as a scratch to show! We located two places for our squad trenches, and weary as we were, commenced to dig. All night we sweated, fighting "for dear life" this time in very truth! And by dawn, the hard, chalky earth had yielded us only a scant two feet of shelter! Of course, there was more or less shelling all night, but it's funny how quickly one gets used to them. When you've been in the line only a short time, you know "Jerry's" favorite spots, and as you hear one whistle overhead, you say, "That's going to ——ville," or "'Jerry's' shelling the road again," and you go on with your work as though nothing was happening.

You're drawn pretty close to the man next to you at a time like that—and you learn to know him, too. You spot the real men in an instant—and the yellow dogs, too, in the twinkling of an eye, and you learn to have a new respect for your officer when you see him get down in the ditch and wield a pick as hard as the next man!

*Thursday, August 15th*

Our morning greeting was another gentle rain of shells, many of which were falling right in our tiny wood. We were driven from our half-finished trenches, and took shelter in some old funk-holes at the rear of the wood. The shells seemed to follow us there, too, so back we raced to our former shelter. Soon the din subsided, and we were able to lift up our heads and look about us. Wreckage? You bet! Three of "Fran's" ammunition boxes smashed to splinters, his belt and overcoat that had been hanging on a tree, riddled with shrapnel-holes—and us? Once again, not a scratch to show!

Our trench by this time was nearly finished, so we started enlarging it, with a view to making a little dugout that would offer at least some shelter. Fortunately, the thick verdure over our heads enabled us to work in daylight. Tired to exhaustion though they were, the boys "carried on;" no one needed to ask for a relief at the pick or shovel—every one of them realized where salvation lay!

By dark the dugout began to show something for our efforts; a few planks at one end, covered with sandbags, offered partial protection; but we were nearly worn out. However, the gun had to be mounted and manned; so between nine and one "Con" and I sat at our posts, listening to the night sounds of the front.

Behind us, and a bit to our left, was a busy battery of 75's. I think "Jerry" hates the 75 as much for its triumphant sound as he does for its marvellous rapidity of fire. The shell leaves the gun with a musical hum that rises in sharp crescendo almost to a shriek. Then as the shell passes the sound dies away, then presently, far off, you hear the dull crash as the shell performs its mission somewhere behind the *Boche* lines. In sharp contrast to the 75 is another gun near us, which the boys have dubbed "Little Nemo." He's a little fellow—perhaps a one-pounder—but the noisiest, most impertinent rascal you can imagine. When his sharp, metallic ring sounds forth, someone in the crowd remarks impressively "Little Nemo has spoken!"

As we sat there at the gun, "Fritz" launched a gas attack on a neighboring town. The shells passed directly in front of our position, and if I live to be a thousand I'll never forget the sound of them. There must have been literally thousands of them, each one singing its own little chromatic song, the ensemble like the sound of a thousand violins, each humming its own ascending and descending scale—you cannot imagine the weird effect they create, as their voices cross and criss-cross, giving the queerest discords, with an occasional note of perfect harmony.

When we were relieved, "Con" and I went in and slept like dead men—our first sleep in two full days.

*Friday, August 16th*

We progressed very well on our dugout today, and began to feel a real confidence in its shelter. The rocks that we sweated over as we dug them out, gave us additional protection when placed on our roof, but they left us a pretty rough floor to sleep on!

Our residence (for seven) is seven feet long, less than five feet wide, and about four feet high; it is entered by a process very similar to "sliding down our cellar door," as

practiced in our best suburbs—only in this case the slide is of nice chalky earth! We've become quite expert, and when the shells start dropping in the neighborhood, we make our entrance in record time!

We got fire orders today; at last, after six months of preparation, we're going to shoot—real bullets at real Huns. It's only harrassing fire, and there may be no Huns near where we're aiming, but at any rate, it's a start!

Our little wood is hardly more than an acre of underbrush, but it's seen busy times in this old war. There are bits of German, French and American equipment scattered everywhere in it—clothing, mess-kits, helmets, old letters and newspapers—one can almost read the history of its skirmishes by the scattered debris. We celebrated our order to fire by making hot coffee, over a German alcohol *Feldkocher* that we picked up. That made the night guards a whole lot easier, as did also the few little shots that we fired off at intervals.

*Saturday, August 17th*

This morning we finished our dugout—and I celebrated by crawling down into its hot, stuffy, fly-infested midst, and sleeping for four hours, with my head propped up against a nice, soft rock, and an overcoat for covering. In the afternoon, Lieut. Ethridge gave me a very interesting hour of instruction, and showed me the methods used in setting a gun by map and compass. Our ration detail was fortunate last night in getting its full quota of eatables, so for one day we have lived well. We even had bacon tonight! I fried it myself over another *Boche* alcohol lamp, and it certainly was luscious. The day has been much more quiet, so the camp was a far cheerier place.

We set our gun in a new position, at the edge of the woods, *camouflaged* it with branches, and went on guard—Black and myself this time. Once the shelling got too close for us, and we ducked for shelter, but we were soon able to go back to our gun.

There were big doings in the sector to our left—guns booming, houses burning, and at least two Hun ammunition dumps going up in impotent smoke and flame.



As we sat at the gun, there was a crashing in the brush and Lieut. Harris came breezing in, with his "Kindergarten" behind him. That's what we call the troop of fellows who come up each night to see the positions, relieve one or two, or carry ammunition. They're always more or less scared, and we "old-stagers" of a week's growth, of course retail to them all the horrors of our position. They brought us water, sandbags and news—we couldn't quite figure out which of the three was most welcome! The lieutenant also brought us new fire orders, which will mean even less sleep for ye corporal. Oh, well—!

*Sunday, August 18th*

I rose early, and looked around to see if the coffee could be gotten under way—but, alas! The Germans hadn't left us enough lamps! Then I tried to make a smokeless wood fire in our dugout. Rats! If I'd been trying to make an anti-bug smudge, I couldn't have smoked more successfully! At last, necessity helped us out, and we made a roaring-hot, smokeless fire, with what? Simply a strip of burlap, rolled up, with two ordinary candles sliced up and rolled inside it! Try it some time. Then I discovered the sad news that our ration boys came home last night empty-handed. There was a slip somewhere between the ration-dump and us, so we had to delve into our reserve of hard biscuits and "woolly."

However, we were well supplied with water by our industrious water-detail (they carry canteens and pails right across the fields just after dark—exposed to enemy fire, it's true, but what's that compared with a wash and a drink?)—so we shaved, washed, combed the kinks (*and* the chalk!) out of our hair, and then sat around like children, admiring our regained beauty! For supper—you may smile, but I can tell you we didn't!—one cracker, two sardines.

We rearranged our gun-guard tonight, placing the guards of "Fran's" gun and mine, for safety's sake, at a central point near an old dugout, from where the signal to fire would be plainly visible.

We got no signal to fire—but other folks did, and all night the sky was bright with the flare of more *Boche*

ammunition dumps, blown sky-high by our artillery. We had a slight attack of mustard gas, but because of our elevated position, it bothered us but little. Things quieted down enough after midnight so that I got about four hours of real sleep before breakfast.

*Monday, August 19th*

You can bet we were hungry when we crawled out of our hole this morning!—and this time fortune was good to us. The old burlap ration-bag was bulging. What if the jam and the celery, the doughnuts and the coffee *were* all mixed up? They were *there*—that was the important thing; and bread and butter, too, and sweet Red Cross crackers, and a can of pears! Oh, what a day!

Both Lieut. Ethridge and Lieut. Harris spent this morning figuring on new firing orders, and after lunch we set our gun for the new work. Ye corporal will be at his gun from nine to twelve, firing with one man of his team, and from three to five with another man. The rest of ye corporal's time is his own!

"Con" and I fired for the first period, and then retired to the dugout. But try as I would, I couldn't sleep. The sleeping forms seemed to fill the little hole absolutely, and I sat on a sharp rock, with my head against another one, and tried for an hour to coax unwilling slumber. But she was not to be coaxed, so I crawled out and sat out in the air, until three o'clock came. And I was repaid by seeing the city of B—— in flames, kindled probably by our artillery. It blazed for two or three hours, and was still smoldering at dawn, when we drew in our gun, stowed away the *camouflage* and took down our fire screen. This, by the way, is a huge contraption designed to conceal the flash of our gun. It's made of sandbags, raincoats, shelter-halves and sticks, the whole held together with a weird assortment of tent-ropes, shoe-laces, strings, handkerchiefs and straps. It's no beauty, but believe me, it's a true friend!

*Tuesday, August 20th*

The ration party last night garnered the precious news of coming mail, and also brought us chocolate and

cigarettes, so the morning was a cheery one. After breakfast, as usual, we had our siesta, and then cleaned guns and helped "Fran" to prepare his gun for the all-night firing session. Ours will remain silent unless signalled to fire.

"Fran" ran into a nice little artillery *barrage* in the wee, sma' hours, but his boys stuck it out and fired their full quota, and none of them cashed in. Maj. Baxter was right: "It's surprising how many bullets it takes to kill a man!"

*Wednesday, August 21st*

Once more we're on light rations. It's no easy job bringing up supplies over roads subjected to constant shelling, but that doesn't make it any easier for us up here. I guess it's worse on an open front like this than on one where the front line can be reached through sheltered trenches. But no trench systems for mine! They spell stagnation.

—And the mail-bag went to Lieut. Miller's position! When George Wood and I heard that, we looked at each other. George knew I loved my mail and I knew he loved his. We glanced at the heavy fog-bank that hid the German lines. "Shall we make a break for it, George?" I asked. "Sure"—and we went and got the mail, though by the time we were on our way back, our protecting fog-bank had faded into thin air.

And more news! Tomorrow we leave the lines, turning over all our equipment to the relieving company! That is the most joyous news we've had in a week, and coupled with the ecstasy of letter-reading made us all hardly fit for soldiering.

We spent the afternoon proving that you can't sleep and swat hordes of flies—and then went through an average front-line night.

*Thursday, August 22nd*

Well! The Alpha and Omega of our stay in the front line are certainly the interesting parts! The *Boche* have picked this morning to make a little attack in our sector, and we've spent the whole day firing, until our ammunition was nearly used up. We can't see the *Boche*—that's

the tantalizing part of it. "Hig" and I did snipe two this afternoon, though, and great was the rejoicing. If they get us now, we've at least got an even break with Kaiser Bill—and I'll venture that the few thousand pills we've peppered into those woods have caught a few more and sent them to whatever is German for "Blighty."

This afternoon a lieutenant and what was left of his platoon took refuge in our woods. They were pretty much shot up, hungry and almost crazy with thirst. They drank up all our water before we knew it, and before dark I was so thirsty myself from the heat of our gun that I drank ravenously out of a canvas bucket of soapy water in which at least two of us had washed! And do you know, it wasn't so bad, at that.

When I went to bed (!) at midnight, it was with no hope of being relieved tonight, and with the full expectation of being called to help "repel boarders" before dawn. Imagine my joy, then, at being awakened at about two, to find the relieving squads there, and our march back to the reserves protected by a huge, Allied *barrage*, that kept "Jerry's" guns silent and their snipers ducking for cover!

It was quite a drag, and we were worn out—but I never remember in all my life, being more willing to hike!

Once more my bed was the ground, an overcoat my coverlet, and a bush my shelter from vagrant breezes.

*Friday, August 23rd*

We rested today—though it's hardly a real rest when the shells are breaking within a hundred yards of you, and you have to pitch your tent over a hole in the ground for fear of getting clipped! However, it's aeons better than the front line. And oh! uncounted glory! *Packages!* Packages from England, one with fruit cake, and the other full of chocolates, gathered painfully, a quarter of a pound in each shop, and then assembled in a big tin box! How we did guzzle! Incidentally, I take off my hat once more to the mind-reading U. S. Mail. Could any genius have found a more psychological moment for bringing civilized sweets on the scene? And magazines, too—my tent has become a regular circulating library!

*Saturday, August 24th*

A bit of excitement this afternoon! A "ranging" shot from a German artillery piece dropped right in our midst. Nothing but Providence saved us from having a dozen or more casualties. As it was, Clarence How gathered in a bit of shrapnel in the back and went jogging off to the hospital on a stretcher, grinning at the prospect of a couple of weeks' rest and coddling.

*Sunday, August 25th*

Today is Sunday, and we celebrated it, first by a class in First Aid, and then by a church service. After the sermon, the Chaplain conducted a special little Holy Communion service for those of us who wanted it. I took it as a sort of "Solomonic justice" that the "fair linen cloth" was laid over a German ammunition box!

After lunch, with much ceremony and sorrow, I sent Henry Wrist-Watch, my best friend, to England to be mended. May fortune grant him a safe (*and speedy!*) return!

I was awakened during the night by the trickle of muddy water down my forehead and nose. It was raining, and our little tent was unable quite to span our funk-hole!—hence the mud. It is indicative of the development of my soldier training that I merely swore mildly, pulled my blanket over my head, rolled over and went to sleep again!

*Monday, August 26th*

Today has been uneventful until this evening. At about twenty minutes' notice I and three of my squad up-staked and hiked off to man one of the anti-aircraft guns hereabouts. To our surprise and pleasure, we found ourselves located in the grounds of a ruined *chateau*! It was too dark to do much exploring, so we picked out the two choicest of the myriad little dugouts in the vicinity, and prepared for the night. We might have saved ourselves the trouble, for when darkness fell, we found that we were in the midst of a whole country-side full of guns, which managed to make the first three-quarters of the night sleepless, and the last quarter hideous—except when



one mused gleefully over the dodging "Jerries" at the other end!

*Tuesday, August 27th*

Ruin that is absolute is never so affecting as ruin which leaves behind it traces of former grandeur. And that is what surrounds us here. A huge line of almost primeval trees—scarred and broken by a shell-fire that could not succeed in destroying their majesty; a park, its lawns trampled by cavalry, pockmarked with funk-holes and dugouts, its paths untrimmed and scattered with debris—and yet as lovely as ever under the radiance of a kindly moon; a pool, clogged and stagnant, yet still reflecting the ancient elms and pines, and the flowers that now grow wild along its banks; and the *chateau* itself, its main wing a mass of stones and timbers, but its corner tower almost unharmed, and sheltering some relics still of its glorious past.

The first floor of this tower was the library; and here at the old gentleman's secretary I'm sitting as I write. Behind me is a bookcase full of rare old volumes, some in manuscript, and many of them probably priceless. Why they were left unharmed no one can say—but there they are, and my good friend and fellow-delver, Fred Schmitt, is burrowing into their fascinating depths as I write.

Scattered all about the room, and half-buried in the broken plaster, laths and draperies that cover the floor, are countless old deeds and papers, beautifully engrossed on parchment, full of delicately-drawn and colored maps and plans. Some of them date back to the sixteenth century. They would make wonderful souvenirs, but none of us seem to want to take them. Who knows? Perhaps when *Monsieur* comes back to his shattered castle, he may be able to rescue from that hopeless-looking pile, some possessions of his that the world's store of gold could not replace. No; we'll leave them for *Monsieur*; the hand of war has borne on him heavily enough. But surely we may browse about a bit, and gather what we can of the history of the place and its owners—yes, and there's a bit of scandal, too, hidden here and there among these venerable old parchments, and others not so ancient!

This afternoon I went to the nearest Y. M. C. A., missed Walter Gano by a fraction of a minute, and had rather poor picking, as they were about sold out. However, a trip back to company headquarters was productive of a little Red Cross chocolate, which appeased our ravenous appetites a bit. Then "Con" got a package from home, which his wife had miraculously mailed on the captain's order, so we feasted for the first time in four months on American-made sweets—a treat indeed!

The watches tonight were much more quiet—we actually got some sleep!

*Wednesday, August 28th*

Our off-duty hours were spent in exploring the endless nooks and corners of the *chateau*; and for the last hour or two I've been here at the old boy's desk scrivening. I think I'll stop now and join "Schmitt" for a while in exploring the depths of our host's library. And now it's nearly dark—I'll have to quit and go back to our little camp, roll my pack, and prepare for the less-joyous-than-usual task of being relieved. Leaving this place is quite a wrench—it's a friendly old garden, with its paternal trees and quaint, rambling outbuildings. I have a queer feeling that I'll come back some day.

The day ended with no further event than our return to camp and a cold dinner.

*Cop. P. R. Campbell*

[This was the last diary-letter received from Sergt. Campbell, he having been promoted to the rank of Sergeant a few days before his death. A subsequent report stated that "Sergt. Campbell was killed on the night of Wednesday, September 4, 1918, after having done noble work in giving first aid to a number of his comrades under heavy shell fire."]

## The Four Members of the Pratt & Lambert Family Who Made the Supreme Sacrifice in the Cause of Democracy

*Answering the call to service, the following P&L men willingly left peaceful occupations to uphold and defend the right of liberty—to offer their all, if necessary, upon the Altar of Freedom.*

CADET GEORGE BIERBAUM, aged twenty-four years, left the grinding room of the Buffalo factory to enlist in the Aviation Corps shortly after our declaration of war. Having previously served in the regular army, he promptly answered his Country's call, hoping to win a coveted commission as an aviator. He was fatally injured in an aeroplane accident at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, December 28, 1917. While with us but a short time, we take solemn pride in adding his name to those on the P&L Honor Roll who have "gone West."

SERGT. PEYTON RANDOLPH CAMPBELL, aged twenty-four years, Assistant Advertising Manager of Pratt & Lambert-Inc., left that position to enter Co. D, 306th Machine Gun Batn., early in 1918. With seventeen others of his unit, on September 4, 1918, near Fismes, France, "Randy" was killed by a shell, after having rendered heroic service to wounded comrades.

This talented master advertising man wrote not only effective sales literature, but short stories and songs—being no mean musician. Locally, one of his best known creations was the facsimile newspaper front page announcing the supposed invasion of the United States by the Germans, written to boost the Second Liberty Loan.

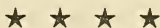
On the way overseas, and until his death, "Randy" wrote a diary-letter to his mother. These diary-letters, recently published in book form, contain characteristic touches of humor and philosophy, and proclaim him an able writer, an affectionate son and a loyal and modest soldier.



PTE. CHARLES JOHN FICKEL, aged twenty-three years, was a conscientious P&L employee who rose in three years from packer to Assistant Superintendent in the Bridgeburg factory, Ontario. Leaving Bridgeburg, his home, April 10, 1918, Pte. Fickel, convalescing from an illness, went overseas with a draft contingent, as No. 3314548 of the 50th Batn., 8th Inf., Canadian Reserves. After training two months at Camp Whitley, England, having fully recovered his health, he was sent to a front-line trench in France, where he was killed the first day by shell concussion. The same determination to do his best was manifested in his conduct as a soldier.

PTE. THEODORE COLLEY WILLIAMS, aged twenty-four years, lost his life June 19, 1918, the second day of the big Allied drive at Soissons, France. First stationed at Camp Dix, N. J., Pte. Williams, or "Theo," as he was affectionately called by his associates, left for overseas February, 1918, in 2d Co., 4th Inf., Training Batn., Depot Div., 1st Corps., A. E. F., in which service he was made Acting Corporal. Upon his request, he was subsequently transferred as a private to Co. C, 28th Inf., 1st Div., A. E. F. This contingent of "regulars" participated in the drive which marked the turning point of the war.

Leaving Thomaston, Maine, as a youth, "Theo" came to the Buffalo factory, where for the past six years he was employed as a varnish-maker, being in the Car and Railroad Department at the time of entering the service. His winning smile will be remembered by his many friends, who can find in this erstwhile varnish-maker the type of American who smiles even at death, knowing that his passing is his contribution to mankind.



The World War has thus brought home to the P&L Family the fact that war is not all glory—that it brings in its wake cruel wounds which Time alone can heal. Such examples of heroism and fidelity to a noble cause, furnished by these former associates, can only inspire us, their debtors, to steadfast, faithful allegiance to every high purpose represented by the flag for which they fought and died.



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LBAp'19

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Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.  
Neutralizing agent: Magnesium Oxide  
Treatment Date: MAY 2001

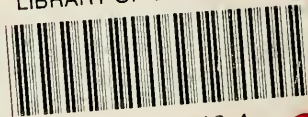
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